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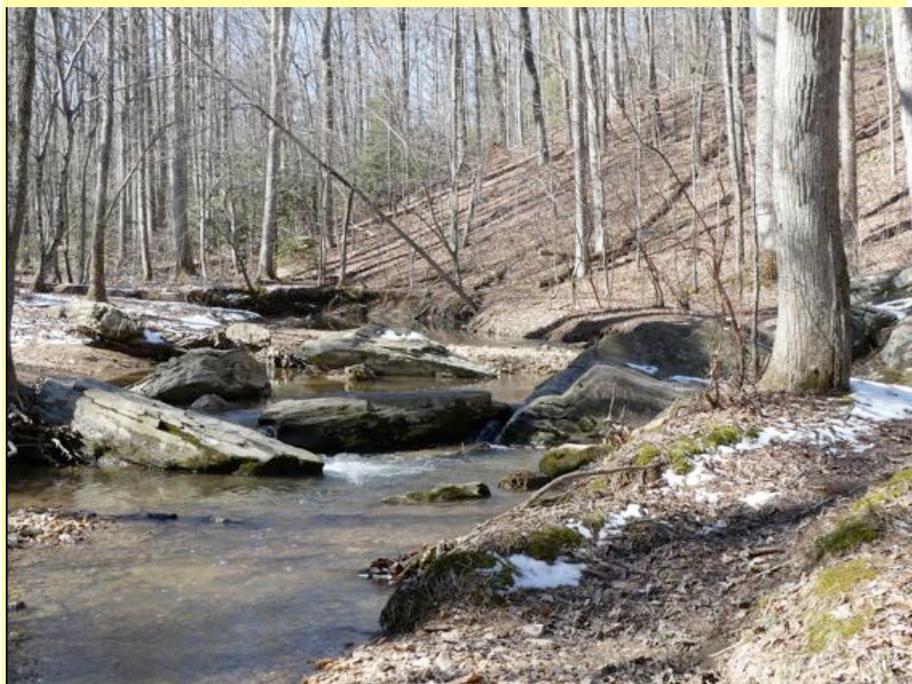
# POTOWMACK NEWS

*Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society*

VOLUME 34, NO. 2, MAR 15-MAY, 2016

## Discovering Fred Crabtree Park

By Jan Meyer



ROCK CROSSING AT FRED CRABTREE PARK.  
PHOTO BY GAYLAN MEYER.

*Jan Meyer started doing Early Detection Rapid Response surveys at Fred Crabtree Park in 2011. She shifted to Invasive Management Area work there in 2014, but always takes time to appreciate the natives. -- Editor*

Fred Crabtree Park covers 200 mostly undeveloped acres on Fox Mill Road south of Reston. In 1978 Fairfax County allocated money to acquire the land for the park. It was originally named Fox Mill Regional Park, but was renamed Fred Crabtree Park in 2006 to honor a citizen who was very influential in acquiring land for Fairfax County Parks.

Several historic maps on the Fairfax County website offer snapshots of land use in the past. In 1860 the future park was all farm land including fields, woods and farm buildings. By 1937, an aerial map shows half the area wooded and the other half abandoned fields with some trees. By 1953, another aerial map shows the land completely forested. It remained wooded at the time of purchase in 1978.

The park has a couple of baseball fields on one side and a soccer field on the other. Crossfield Elementary School is surrounded by the park and was built in 1988. The wooded area is about 150 acres. There are unmarked, informal trails throughout the park. Without any signs, it is best to pay close attention to the paths taken.

Little Difficult Run cuts through the southwest corner. The prettiest

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## Upcoming Events

### John Magee: Native Plants in the Landscape

Thurs, March 17, 7:30 pm

Green Spring Gardens Horticulture Center

Landscape designer & VNPS State Horticulture Chair John Magee walks us through native plant projects he has done over the years, with before and after photos and suggestions for how we all can plant more natives on our own properties.

### Signs of Spring at Blockhouse Point, MD, with Carrie Blair

Sat, March 19, 1-3 pm

Blockhouse Point, Potomac MD

### Alonso Abugattas: Gardening with Wildlife in Mind: The Habitat Value of Native Plants

Thurs, April 14, 7:30 pm

Green Spring Gardens Horticulture Center

### Turkey Run Wildflower Walk with Cris Fleming

Sat, April 16, 9 am-1 pm

Turkey Run Park, McLean, VA

### Trillium Walk at Thompson Wildlife Management Area with Alonso Abugattas

Sat, April 30, 9:30 am-2:30 pm

Thompson WMA, Linden, VA

### Michael J. Raupp: How Bugs Make the World Go Around

Thurs, May 12, 7:30 pm

Green Spring Gardens Horticulture Center

All events are free and open to the public. Walks require preregistration. Join our listserve at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/vnps-pot> to receive notices with walk registration links

## Botanic Names: Hedgehogs or Sea Urchins?

By Margaret Chatham

The Greek word “*echinos*” is sometimes translated as “hedgehog,” sometimes as “sea urchin.” Either way you look at it, where the word occurs in botanic names, look for a flower group or seed head that is round and prickly.

So the next time you see *Echinacea purpurea*, purple coneflower, notice how much rounder and spikier its disc of flowers is than that of other coneflowers.

*Pinus echinata*, short-leaf pine, bears prickly pinecones that echo a hedgehog. while *Echinops sphaerocephalus*, globe thistle, with its spherical head of flowers, suggests a sea urchin. I can thank the Grass Bunch for calling my attention to *Cyperinus echinatus*, globe Flatsedge, with its many spiky balls of first flowers then seeds.

*Echinochloa crus-galli*, barnyard grass, translates as sea urchin grass with cock’s spurs. In this plant one needs at least a hand lens to observe the hedgehog shape, which is found not in the inflorescence as a whole, even though bristly awns abound on its branches, but in the individual seeds, which are covered with rows of spikes.

PHOTOS PINUS ECHINATA ABOVE, CYPERINUS ECHINATUS BELOW, BY MARGARET CHATHAM.



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Submissions to *Potowmack News* may be sent to The Editor at [vnps.pot@gmail.com](mailto:vnps.pot@gmail.com)

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FRED CRABTREE PARK CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

point in the park is "Rock Crossing" where the run cuts between two hills and the stream cascades around some large rocks. When the Pinxters (*Rhododendron periclymenoides*) are blooming the view is at its best.

A winter walk is very pleasant at the park with many plants having green leaves or stems. The most abundant green plants in the shrub level are American Holly (*Ilex opaca*) and Common Greenbrier (*Smilax rotundifolia*). There are lots of Christmas Ferns (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) and Intermediate Wood Ferns (*Dryopteris intermedia*), and some Marginal Wood Ferns (*Dryopteris marginalis*) and Rock Polypody (*Polypodium virginianum*) as well. Three kinds of lycopods can be found here: Common Ground Pine (*Dendrolycopodium obscurum*), Common Running Cedar (*Diphasiastrum digitatum*) and, less often, Shining Clubmoss (*Huperzia lucidula*). Spotting orchid leaves in winter can be rewarding. Both Cranefly Orchid (*Tipularia discolor*) and Downy Rattlesnake Plantain (*Goodyera pubescens*) nestle in the leaf litter. When you find a winter orchid leaf, note its location so you can return later in the season to look for the orchid in bloom.



Three kinds of pine grow in the park: Virginia Pine (*Pinus virginiana*), Pitch Pine (*Pinus rigida*), and Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*). Virginia Pine has short, twisted needles in groups of two, Pitch Pine has

somewhat longer needles in groups of three and White Pine has grayish, flexible needles in groups of five. Winter is a good time to spot Pitch Pine in the park. Pitch pines are distinctive in that needles can grow right from the trunk. Also you can often find branches on the ground that make identifying easier than trying to count the needles at the top of the trees.

At the end of February, the Wood Frogs (*Rana sylvatica*) congregate in large numbers to mate. Their call is supposed to sound like ducks in the woods. The first time I heard the calls, I was up on a hill near "Rock Crossing." I followed the calls and found 50-100 wood frogs at several vernal pools near Little Difficult Run, actively mating. It was very exciting to see an event that I had only read about.

In early April, the lowlands by Little Difficult Run have an abundance of spring flowers. Upstream the spring beauties are everywhere and downstream the trout lilies are abundant. An interesting little plant, Golden Saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium americanum*), is also blooming at this time. It is found down a little side trail in a seep to the right from the trail from the Soccer field to Little Difficult Run. Though each plant is small – the flower is only 3/16 of an inch with green sepals and red anthers – it forms large mats on the seep.

The end of April brings a few more spring flowers to "Rock Crossing." These include Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), Wild Pink (*Silene caroliniana*), Early Saxifrage (*Micranthes virginensis*), Solomon's-seal (*Polygonatum*



*biflorum*), and Rue Anemone (*Thalictrum thalictroides*). What they lack in quantity they make up in quality.

An old cemetery, Thompson-Kidwell Family Cemetery, is located in the park. There were about 40 burials between 1875 and 1925. A fence encloses the cemetery and about twenty or so gravestones, all illegible. Some old-fashioned Bridal-wreath Spiraea (*Spiraea prunifolia*) were planted here long ago, and a few still blossom at the end of April. Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) historically has been planted at cemeteries to clothe the earth in a suitably somber dark green and to keep other weeds from growing. This cemetery's patch has escaped into the woods.



In the first half of May in the upland areas, there are a few more scattered flowers including Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*), Pinxter (*Rhododendron periclymenoides*), Canada Mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*), Rattlesnake Weed (*Hieracium venosum*), Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*), Indian Cucumber-root (*Medeola virginiana*) and Perfoliate Bellwort (*Uvularia perfoliata*).

The woods do not have many flowers in July, but I have seen Pinesap (*Hypopitys monotropa*) in an upland area and St. Andrew's Cross (*Hypericum hypericoides*) on a hill by the "Rock Crossing."

There are more plants blossoming in August, usually near the streams or openings. From the trail near the soccer field there are several Carolina Elephant's Foot (*Elephantopus carolinianus*) growing. On a walk along the trails, one finds lots of Naked-Flowered Tick Trefoil (*Hylodesmum nudiflorum*) and Indian Tobacco (*Lobelia inflata*). Starry Campion (*Silene stellata*) and Winged Monkeyflower (*Mimulus alatus*) grow by

Little Difficult Run. Hog Peanut (*Amphicarpaea bracteata*), Blue-stemmed Goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*) and Virginia Bugleweed (*Lycopus virginicus*) are found along upland trails.

It's not surprising that my trips to Fred Crabtree Park are not just a duty, but a pleasure at any time of year.

PHOTOS PREVIOUS PAGE: GOLDEN SAXIFRAGE (*CHRYOSPLENIUM AMERICANUM*) BY GAYLAN MEYER; INDIAN CUCUMBER-ROOT (*MEDEOLA VIRGINIANA*) BY JAN MEYER. THIS PAGE: PINESAP (*HYPOPITYS MONOTROPA*) BY GAYLAN MEYER.

## WHERE YOU CAN WHACK SOME INVASIVE PLANTS

Falls Church Habitat Restoration Team



Help restore the local ecosystem in city parks. Remove invasives and plant natives that will benefit local birds and butterflies. For more information contact Melissa Teates at 703-538-6961 or melanite@verizon.net

Arlington County's Remove Invasive Plants (RiP) Program

Help Rescue Arlington parks from alien plant invaders! Please bring your own tools. For more information, contact Sarah Archer at 703-228-1862 or sarcher@arlingtonva.us



Reston Association's Habitat Heroes Program



Brock at 703-435-7986 or ha@reston.org

Help restore local wildlife habitat through invasive plant removal and replanting with native plants For more information, contact Ha

Fairfax County's Invasive Management Area (IMA) Program

Help remove invasive plants and learn about new invasive species. For more information, contact Leslie Gerhard at 703-324-8681 or leslie.gerhard@fairfaxcounty.gov



**WORD OF THE MONTH: IMBRICATE** (adj.)  
overlapping like roof tiles or shingles, derived from Latin  
from Greek meaning rain. Imbricate flower bud of  
*Rhododendron catawbiense* shown.

PHOTO BY MARGARET CHATHAM



## Spring Native Plant Sales (an incomplete list)

Sat, April 2, 9:30 am-2 pm **Friends of the National Arboretum Native Plant Sale**, US National Arboretum, 3501 New York Ave., NE, Washington, DC (open to Lahr Symposium registrants at 8:30 am)  
[www.usna.usda.gov/Education/events](http://www.usna.usda.gov/Education/events)

Wed, April 6, 10 am-1 pm (and first Wed of each month through Oct) **VNPS First Wednesday Plant Sales** at VNPS-Potowmack propagation beds behind the Horticulture Center at Green Spring Gardens are open for sales. We'll just be starting the work season on April 6, but when better to catch the spring beauties in bloom? [Vnps.org/potowmack](http://Vnps.org/potowmack)



Sat, April 23, 9 am-3 pm **Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy**, Morven Park, Leesburg  
[www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org)

Sat, April 30, 9 am-2 pm **Northern Alexandria Native Plant Sale** at The Church of St. Clement, 1701 N. Quaker Lane, Alexandria (formerly Parkfairfax Native Plant Sale) brings in 14 or more vendors from 4 states. [www.NorthernAlexandriaNativePlantSale.org](http://www.NorthernAlexandriaNativePlantSale.org)

Sat, April 30, 1-4 pm **Long Branch Nature Center Native Plant Sale**, 625 Carlin Springs Road, Arlington  
<https://parks.arlingtonva.us/locations/long-branch-nature-center-park/>

Sun, May 1, 10 am-2 pm **Earth Sangha Open House and Plant Sale**, Earth Sangha Native Plant Nursery, Cloud Drive entrance to Franconia Park, Springfield – What could be better for May Day? [www.earthsangha.org](http://www.earthsangha.org)

Sat, May 7, 9 am-noon **Prince William Wildflower Society Native Plant Sale** at Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church, 8712 Plantation Lane, Manassas.  
[Nvehrs1@yahoo.com](mailto:Nvehrs1@yahoo.com)

Sat & Sun, May 7&8, 9 am-4:30 pm **Garden Days at Blandy State Arboretum**, Boyce, VA. Not just natives, but lots of plants, information & food. [Blandy.virginia.edu](http://Blandy.virginia.edu)

Sat, May 14, 9 am-3 pm **Green Spring Garden Day**, includes VNPS-Potowmack propagation beds behind the Horticulture Center, and some native plant vendors mixed in with the non-natives.  
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/greenspring/events.htm>



VIRGINIA BLUEBELLS (*MERTENSIA VIRGINICA*) AND SPIDERWORT (*TRADESCANTIA VIRGINIANA*) PHOTOS: M CHATHAM

## POTOWMACK NEWS

Virginia Native Plant Society

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## Oh, Deer! (What won't you eat?)



Yes, if the deer are hungry enough, they'll eat anything. But there are some plants that are less often consumed. Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*) is one of these, whether because of its low profile or its gingery flavor. It is deciduous, but spreads more quickly than the evergreen Partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*) described last issue. Wild Ginger flowers open right on ground level at about the same time as its leaves are coming out. Once the leaves are fully grown, the flowers are not easy to see. It is a myrmecochore, spread by ants that eat the fatty elaiosome attached to each seed and then dump the seeds to grow in new places. It needs at least some shade, and is happy in wet places. – And you'll be able to buy either wild ginger or

partridgeberry at VNPS plant sales, first Wednesdays, 10 am to 1 pm on Apr. 6 or May 4; or 9 am to 3 pm on Green Spring's Garden Day, Saturday, May 14.

For more deer-resistant natives, see <http://www.plantnovanatives.org/deer---native-plants.html>

Photo by Laura Beaty

**If you would like to receive this newsletter (in full color!) electronically, contact Alan Ford at: [amford@acm.org](mailto:amford@acm.org)**