

# POTOWMACK NEWS

*Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society*

VOLUME 36, No. 5, OCT-DEC, 2018

## Fairfax County Official Wildflower

By Michael Reinemer



TRUMPET HONEYSUCKLE, *LONICERA SEMPERVIRENS*. PHOTO BY MARGARET CHATHAM

Can you name the official wildflower of Fairfax County, Virginia?

Trick question. There isn't one, yet.

VNPS President Nancy Vehrs pointed out that Prince William County has named the Virginia Bluebell *Mertensia virginica*, symbol of the Prince William Wildflower Society, as its official wildflower, and suggested that Fairfax County should also have an official wildflower. Donna Murphy led the Board of Directors of the Potowmack Chapter in drafting a resolution proposing that Fairfax County adopt Coral Honeysuckle *Lonicera sempervirens* as the county's official wildflower. This resolution will be presented to the county's Board of Supervisors Environmental Committee on Oct. 2 with the hope that they will establish this native as the official wildflower. Link for information on that meeting: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/board-environmental-committee-meeting-oct-2-2018>.

Awareness of and appreciation for native plants is growing. Thriving programs like the Plant NoVA Natives campaign underscore the gathering momentum of this movement. In fact, a drawing of *Lonicera sempervirens* is the logo for that campaign. We hope establishing a native plant as the official county flower will help.

Why this plant? Let the resolution speak for itself:

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## Upcoming

### DATE CHANGED

#### Statewide VNPS Annual Meeting & Conference

Oct 5-7, Williamsburg & vicinity

See the complete schedule of walks and talks at [vnps.org](http://vnps.org).

### DATE CHANGED

#### Megan Whatton:

##### Habitat Network

Thursday, Oct 4 7:30-9 pm

Green Spring Gardens Horticulture Center

Habitat Network Project Manager for the Nature Conservancy introduces this free online platform to explore how our collective efforts to transform yards and urban landscapes into more diverse habitat can support wildlife and connect people to nature.

### DATE CHANGED

#### Potowmack Chapter Annual Meeting

##### Marion Lobstein:

##### Flora of Virginia App

Sunday, Nov 11, 1-4 pm

Green Spring Gardens Horticulture Center

The *Flora of Virginia* can now fit in your pocket. Learn how the new Flora of Virginia Mobile App can make you feel like a pro in the woods, with its graphic key, dichotomous keys, photographs, and range maps.

*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.*

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## VNPS-Potowmack Chapter is looking for a few good plant people

We need people who care about native plants and share our goal of preserving them and spreading word about their importance. You may want to get your hands dirty at our propagation beds on Wednesday mornings, April through October. Or help us rescue plants in wild areas scheduled for development. Or attend our programs and walks to learn more about native plants. We also need people to serve on our board of directors. Take a look at the roster of Board Officers to the right, and you'll notice vacancies listed for Vice President, Education and Social Media. The only requirements are an interest in native plants and a modest amount of your time, spent hanging out with like-minded plant people. If any of these interest you, or if you'd like to understudy another position to help our chapter, please contact Alan Ford. We are all volunteers and we welcome any help you can provide. Tell your friends and neighbors about us too.

## WHERE YOU CAN WHACK SOME INVASIVE EXOTIC 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](mailto: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](mailto:sarcher@arlingtonva.us)

### Reston Association's Habitat Heroes Program

Help restore local wildlife habitat through invasive plant removal and replanting with native plants For more information, contact Ha Brock at 703-435-7986 or [ha@reston.org](mailto:ha@reston.org)

### Fairfax County's Invasive Management Area (IMA) Program

Help remove invasive plants and learn about new invasive species. For more information, contact Erin Stocksclaeder at 703-324-8681 or [erin.stocksclaeder@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:erin.stocksclaeder@fairfaxcounty.gov)

## Potowmack Chapter Board Officers

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

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

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



## RESOLVED:

**WHEREAS**, Fairfax County currently lacks an official, native wildflower; and

**WHEREAS**, Trumpet or Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) is a beautiful, native flowering vine that is indigenous to the Fairfax County area; that lives in a variety of conditions from dry uplands to floodplain forests as well as clearings and disturbed habitats; and

**WHEREAS**, Trumpet Honeysuckle has a long bloom time of coral, trumpet-shaped flowers from March through July and sporadically through the fall that attract hummingbirds, and red berries from July through September that feed songbirds; and

**WHEREAS**, Trumpet Honeysuckle, in addition to being native, is also commercially available for residents to grow and enjoy in their own yards, and can even be planted in large pots, while leaving wild stands of honeysuckle and all other wildflowers and native plants undisturbed;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society hereby supports the adoption of the Trumpet or Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) for the honor of being named Fairfax County's official, native wildflower.

## Cultivars

### Synopsis of Annie S. White's work by Margaret Chatham

Are cultivars of native plants acceptable substitutes for the native plants as they occur in nature? Many of us have wrestled with this question, and now at last we have some well-researched answers: "It all depends" and "Acceptable to whom?"

Annie S. White has done research in Vermont on the value of cultivars for pollinator habitat restoration, planting out a number of native wildflowers and cultivars that claim to be the same only better, then observing how many of which pollinators visit them. She chose varieties readily found in the trade, to assist people doing restoration plantings where large numbers of plants are required. You can read her dissertation "From Nursery to Nature: Evaluating Native Herbaceous Flowering Plants," with full descriptions of her methods, reasoning, observations and results at [scholarworks.uvm.edu](http://scholarworks.uvm.edu).

To summarize, Annie White planted Yarrow, *Achillea millefolium* and the corresponding *A.*



**A FEW POLLINATORS ON NEW ENGLAND ASTER, SYMPHYOTRICHUM NOVAE-ANGLIAE IN THE GREEN SPRING PROPAGATION BEDS, DURING THE CLOUDY PLANT SALE DAY. ALL PHOTOS BY MARGARET CHATHAM.**

*millefolium* "Strawberry Seduction"; Anise Hyssop, *Agastache foenicum* and *Agastache* "Golden Jubilee"; Butterflyweed, *Asclepias tuberosa* and *A. tuberosa* "Hello Yellow"; Blue False Indigo, *Baptisia australis* and *Baptisia x varicolor* "Twilite"; Common Sneezeweed, *Helenium autumnale* and early-blooming *Helenium* hybrid "Moerheim beauty"; Wild Bergamot, *Monarda fistulosa* and *M. fistulosa* "Claire Grace" from Mississippi; Foxglove Beardtongue, *Penstemon digitalis* and *P. digitalis* "Husker Red"; Black-eyed Susan, *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *fulgida* and *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* "Goldsturm"; New England Aster, *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae* and *S. novae-angliae* "Alma Potschke"; Ohio Spiderwort, *Tradescantia ohioensis* and *Tradescantia* "Red Grape"; and Culver's Root, *Veronicastrum virginicum* and *V. virginicum* "Lavendelturm." Across these eleven pairs of plants, she found that in six cases, the total number of insect pollinators visiting the native species was significantly greater than the number that visited the cultivar; in four cases, the species and the cultivar were equally preferred; and in one case, the cultivar was preferred to the species. Honeybees, bumble bees, other native bees, wasps, ants, moths and butterflies showed much the same preferences; flies showed no preference between the native species and the cultivars.

So which is which? White *Achillea millefolium* was visited by significantly more insect pollinators than the red *A. millefolium* "Strawberry Seduction."

Bees were equally attracted to *Agastache foenicum* and *Agastache* “Golden Jubilee” but beetles and bugs had a strong preference for the native species.

There was no significant difference between insect pollinator visits to *Asclepias tuberosa* and *A. tuberosa* “Hello Yellow.”

*Baptisia australis* (blue-violet) and *Baptisia x varicolor* “Twilite” (maroon with yellow keels) are markedly different colors. The cultivar produces more flowers, but the species was visited by more insect pollinators.



**COMMON SNEEZEWEED, HELENIUM AUTUMNALE, WITH RARY A POLLINATOR IN SIGHT. IT'S CALLED “SNEEZEWEED” BECAUSE A DIFFERENT SPECIES OF THE GENUS WAS ONCE USED FOR SNUFF, NOT BECAUSE OF HAY FEVER CONCERNS.**

*Helenium autumnale* was visited by more than eight times as many insect pollinators as early-blooming *Helenium* hybrid “Moerheim beauty.”

There was only a small difference between numbers of insect pollinators visiting *Monarda fistulosa* and *M. fistulosa* “Claire Grace,” with a slight preference for the native.

The same pattern was true for *Penstemon digitalis* and *P. digitalis* “Husker Red,” with markedly fewer pollinator visits overall.

*Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *fulgida* and *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* “Goldsturm” were equally visited, with flies making up about half the total visits.

Ten times as many insect pollinators visited *Symphotrichum novae-angliae* as visited *S. novae-angliae* “Alma Potschke.” Native New England Aster attracted the most insect pollinators of any plant Annie White studied.

*Tradescantia ohioensis* garnered almost

twice as many insect pollinator visits as *Tradescantia* “Red Grape,” because it bore twice as many flowers.

*Veronicastrum virginicum* was the one native plant that received fewer insect pollinator visits than its cultivar, *V. virginicum* “Lavendelturm.”

Annie White also gave trials to four of the over 200 *Echinacea* selections, varieties, and hybrids, mostly created to appeal to human gardeners: Purple Coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea*; open pollinated *Echinacea* selection “White Swan;” double-flowered *Echinacea* “Pink Double Delight” (propagated by tissue culture); and fragrant, yellow interspecific hybrid clone *Echinacea* “Sunrise” (also propagated by tissue culture). She found that bumble bees were the most frequent pollinators overall, and they had a strong preference for the native *Echinacea purpurea*, followed by “White Swan.” Honey bees and other native bees used these two more nearly equally. All the non-bee pollinators put together supplied only about one eighth of the total pollinators, so the preference wasps and ants showed for “Pink Double Delight” couldn’t move it out of last place in total pollinator preference, only slightly behind “Sunrise.”

I recommend reading Annie White’s whole dissertation, but if “dissertation” scares you, ease into her research on her website [pollinorgardens.org](http://pollinorgardens.org).

**NEW ENGLAND ASTER WITH THE SMALL WHITE ASTER SYMPHYOTRICHUM RACEMOSUM THAT ATTRACTS MOST POLLINATORS IN MY YARD**



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P.O. Box 5311, Arlington, VA 22205



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## Sedge Supporting Caterpillar



Henry's Marsh Moth, *Simyra insularis* Photo by Margaret Chatham

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