

POTOWMACK NEWS

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Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

July August 2006

ANCIENT AND EXTREMELY RARE TUPELO-CYPRESS FOREST FOUND IN VIRGINIA.

The Richmond Times Dispatch reported June 12 on negotiations underway for the State of Virginia to purchase land on the Nottaway River that includes a 40 acre tupelo-cypress forest with trees well over 1,000 years old. One bald cypress at the site is the largest tree in Virginia--123 feet tall and over 12 feet in diameter. Three smaller trees are the largest of their species in the country, including a water tupelo sixty-five feet tall and about 10 feet in diameter. "It's a remarkable discovery," said University of Arkansas geosciences professor David Stahle, an expert on old trees. Only "two one-hundredths of 1 percent" of the Southeast's cypress-tupelo forests escaped the saw," Stahle said. International Paper owns the tract of land containing the forest, and a spokesman says it is the type of site the company would like to see preserved. The site was discovered last year by Byron Carmean of Suffolk, a retired horticulture teacher. Gary Fleming of the State of Virginia's Natural Heritage Program has made several canoe trips into the site and believes many of the trees are over 1,000 years old.

WILDFLOWER WALKS AT GREAT FALLS PARK, VIRGINIA, ON THIRD SUNDAYS

Spring ephemerals are long gone, but summer blooming perennials are now putting on their own show in the Potomac Gorge at Great Falls Park, Virginia. Third Sundays of the month from March until October, Marion Lobstein, assisted by Joe Metzger of the Maryland Native Plant Society, leads wildflower walks there to discover what is currently in bloom. Marion, an associate professor of biology at the Manassas Campus of Northern Virginia Community



College, has been conducting these walks for the National Park Service since the late 1980s. Come join Marion, Joe and other wildflower enthusiasts on July 16, August 20, September 17, and October 15. The leisurely two and a half-hour walks begin at 10 a.m. outside the Visitor Center, lower level.

Photos by Bob Yacovissi taken last year at Great Falls in July: Butterfly pea, *Clitoria mariana*, above; and in August, Dense Blazing-star, *Liatris spicata* with a female Zabulon Skipper (*Poanes zabulon*) butterfly (Thanks to Barb Farron for the butterfly identification.)

"Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you." ...Frank Lloyd Wright

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Now Virginia has an exciting counterpart to the Ivory-billed woodpecker. A virgin cypress forest with trees possibly 1,400 years old has been discovered just 80 miles south of Richmond. Considering that only .002 percent of cypress forests escaped logging, the discovery of a 40-acre stand of old growth forest is incredible. That's great news to all native plant enthusiasts in Virginia. In the meantime, discover the incredible in our own backyard. This September, Gary Fleming, ecologist with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Natural Heritage Program, will give a special tour of the Potomac Gorge. It's Gary's way of thanking chapter members who have volunteered so diligently in removing invasives at Turkey Run Park. It's not too late to help; two workdays each month are planned for July and August. I can guarantee you'll see woodpeckers in a very beautiful forest.

Marianne Mooney

CHAPTER TREASURER HEADS FOR HAWAII; NEW TREASURER NEEDED

Vivian "Dusty" Dukes, Potowmack treasurer for the past five years, will be retiring to Hawaii at year's end. She and her husband love to sail and have decided on Hawaii as the place to pursue their passion. We appreciate Dusty's many years of dedicated service on the board, her accurate keeping of the books and her good nature through it all. Dusty also volunteered on Wednesday mornings at our propagation beds potting many plants and endlessly weeding. She has done so much to benefit the chapter and we will miss her very much. We wish Dusty and her husband all the best in their new tropical life.

We are reaching out to our membership for a new treasurer. Briefly, duties include writing checks, making deposits, handling the cash box at plant sales, setting up a budget and managing accounts. Dusty spends about 10 hours a month on her duties and uses Quick Book program. Treasurer's reports are reviewed at chapter board meetings which are held on the second Thursday evening of the month at Green Spring Gardens.

This vital position must be filled. We really need someone to step up to the plate, so if you've ever thought about volunteering for the chapter, now is the time. For continuity's sake, we would ask for a two year commitment. Interested parties please email or call Marianne Mooney at m.mooney@comcast.net or call 703-534-8179.

BOARD OFFICERS

President	Marianne Mooney	534-8179
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Secretary	Lee Ann Kinzer	768-4048
Treasurer (Vacant soon)	Vivian "Dusty" Dukes	938-7912

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(All numbers should include the 703 area code, unless otherwise noted.) *Potowmack News* is published 6 times per year, in Jan, Mar, May, Jul, Sep, and Nov. The deadline for submissions is the 15th day of the month prior to publication. Call Mary Ann Lawler for more information or e-mail her at malawler@aol.com.

**Protecting America's Wildest Urban
River: From Floods to Flowers in the
Potomac Gorge**

July 22- November 19, 2006

An exhibit at the United States Botanic
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<http://www.usbg.gov/education/events/Potomac-Gorge.cfm>

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DESERT-LIKE VIRGINIA NATIVES

Cactus, yucca, and agave bring to mind the deserts areas of the southwest, rather than Virginia; but we do have our own versions of these plants.

In Virginia the only plant in the cactus family (*Cactaceae*) is *Opuntia humifusa*, the Eastern prickly pear cactus, which can be found growing naturally in almost every state east of the Rocky Mountains. Cacti have evolved to endure drought conditions. They have only tiny or no leaves, which reduces their exposure to drying winds. Photosynthesis and water storage occur instead in the stem. They have also evolved to grow spines, which fend off animals seeking a source of water. In autumn, the prickly pear pads become quite shriveled and begin to lie down as the plants withdraw water in preparation for winter.

And Virginia has only two plants in the *Agavaceae* family—*Yucca filamentosa*, Adam's needle, and *Manfreda virginica*, the Virginia agave. Like the prickly pear cactus, *Yucca filamentosa* is found in much of the east. The Atlas of the Flora of Virginia shows them in a majority of Virginia's counties, mostly in the coastal plain and piedmont. And like the cacti, yuccas have evolved special water storage systems in their thick, rhizomous

roots. These roots allow them to thrive even in areas of pure sand. Unlike the cactus, however, they do have leaves which contain the strongest fibers native to North America. In another evolutionary process called obligate mutualism, the yucca and the yucca moth have evolved together so that each needs the other to survive. While hummingbirds and insects visit the flowers, small white yucca moths are the yucca's only pollinators.

The other member of the *Agavaceae* family in Virginia is *Manfreda virginica*, also called *Agave virginica*. Similar in size to the yucca, it grows naturally in southeastern and some Midwestern states, but is found only in Lee County in far western Virginia and in Wayne County in far western West Virginia, where it grows around limestone. Its common name is false aloe or rattlesnake master, as it is considered an antidote to poisonous snake bites.

Look for these desert-like species in dry, rocky, sunny locations in the wild. **M.A. Lawler**

GRASSES: A Most Unappreciated Family of Flowering Plants by Marion Lobstein, Associate Professor of Biology, Northern Virginia Community College

The grass family (*Poaceae* or *Graminae*) is one of the largest flowering plant families with over 10,000 species in over 600 genera worldwide. In terms of economic importance as human food crop species, it is the most important flowering plant family. In Virginia we have almost 270 species in over 80 genera with just under 150 of these species in 50 genera found in Northern Virginia. Recognizing grasses as flowering plants is not very obvious to most people. Once you understand grass flower structure, grasses are a really interesting and beautiful family to recognize and enjoy.

The other two families that are often confused with grasses are the sedges (*Cyperaceae*) and rushes (*Juncacai*). The sedges generally have triangular edges (sedges have edges) and rushes have round stems (rushes are round) with a solid pith. Grasses have round stems, but the stems are hollow between the points of the leaves attaching. Also in grasses, unlike the rushes, the leaf base forms a sheath surrounding the stem before the blade of the leaf expands into the structure easily recognizable as a leaf. The stem of a grass plant that forms the flowers is called a culm. Roots of grass plants are fibrous, with particular species being either annuals or perennials. Grasses are herbaceous except for the bamboos, the only wood members of this family.

The flowers of grasses are wind pollinated and therefore do not have petals or sepals. The basic flower has three stamens and an ovary with two styles that can be quite showy. At the base of the ovary are two small structures called the lodicules that are modified perianth (combined petal and sepal) tissue. There are also other

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GRASSES (Continued from page 3)

modifications that make grass flowers a bit different. Enclosing each flower is a pair of modified leaves or bracts called the lemma and palea (the lemma is closer to the flower than the palea). This combination of a flower enclosed by the lemma and palea is called a floret. The florets are further arranged in structures called spikelets. A spikelet consists of one or more florets with two modified leaves called the first and second glumes beneath the floret or florets. The spikelets are then arranged in inflorescences of spikes, or racemes, or panicles. Once you can visualize these modified structures of spikelets and florets, identifying the grasses becomes possible. Additionally, the veins in the lemmas and flumes may be elongated to form bristle-like structures called awns and are important in identification. The fruit of grasses is the caryopsis or grain.

Many taxonomists divide grass genera into tribes. The Flora of West Virginia has good diagrams of the structure of grasses and good identification keys to tribes, genera, and species of grasses. It places grasses into eleven tribes with a separate identification key to these tribes, then another key to the genera within each tribe, and then each genus will have a key to species. Grasses: an Identification Guide by Lauren Brown is also another good book with which to begin to enjoy the grasses.

The grasses, as mentioned before, are the most important family economically to humans with major grain crops such as corn, wheat, rice, barley, rye, oats, sorghum, and millet. Countless other animals rely on grasses for their food sources. Bamboo is used as building material in many parts of the world. More and more grasses are being used for ornamental purposes. Of course, we are all familiar with the use of grasses for lawns. Our native grasses are especially beautiful in the late summer and falls. Deep Cut and other sites in Manassas National Battlefield Park are particularly good sites for Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) and little blue stem (*Andropogon scoparius*) in the fall.

(Ed. Note: The preceding article originally appeared in the Jan-Feb 1996 edition of Wild News, the newsletter of the Prince William Chapter of VNPS. It is reprinted here with permission.)

PLANT SALE SUCCESSES

The May 20 Potowmack Chapter Native Plant Sale was very successful this year. Hundreds of plants found good homes and the chapter raised revenue that will support our educational mission. Spicebush, VNPS Wildflower of the Year, was the star of the sale. We sold out but will have more available at our **fall sale on September 16th**. That sale will primarily feature fall flowering natives with a special emphasis on host plants for Monarch butterflies: **Butterflyweed, *Asclepias tuberosa*** and the equally beautiful **Swamp milkweed, *Asclepias incarnata***.

These sales would not be possible without the work of our volunteers who potted up plants, watered and weeded 'til they dropped! Many thanks to the "regulars" and to the new volunteers who showed up this spring; our propagation beds have never been so weed-free. Our thanks go to Diane Blair, Tiana Camfiord, Margaret Chatham, Roberta Day, Dusty Dukes, Alan Ford, Eleanor Kask, Mary Ann Lawler, Marianne Mooney, B. J. Opfer, Nora Palmatier, Carol Paquette, Mary Pockman, Lesa Schmidt, Sally Sieracki, and Ginny Yacovissi. Special thanks to Elaine Squeri for preparing the seed packets. We also want to thank those who donated plants that added quantity and diversity to our offerings. Many thanks to Sandy Austin, Diane Blair, Tiana Camfiord, Margaret Chatham, Pat Hicks, Susan Jewell, Eleanor Kask, Mary Ann Lawler, Marianne Mooney, Lisa Schmidt, Rod Simmons and anyone whose name we didn't catch like the person who donated many wood poppies.

A final thank you to those who worked at the plant sale; we really appreciate your efforts. Particular thanks go to Tiana for manning our "Will Answer Any Gardening Question" table and to Dusty for counting the money.

Thanks for your support of the chapter's plant sales; I hope to see you all at our fall sale in September. If you have an abundance of native plants in your garden, please consider donating some to our sale. And there are always more weeds to pull and plants to pot for the fall sale so please consider volunteering with us on Wednesdays from 9:30 to noon at Green Spring Gardens. Call me if you're interested or just drop by.

Laura Beaty, Propagation Chair 703-534-8746

NEW STATE CHAMPION TREES FOR ARLINGTON AND ALEXANDRIA

Arlington County now has a State Champion Post Oak (*Quercus stellata*), which is a county street tree. And an alternate-leaved or pagoda dogwood (*Cornus alterniflora*) at C.F. Smith is still in the running for largest in the state, because the current champion needs to be re-measured. Either way, it will likely be the new State Champion or runner up. And in Alexandria two new State Champions have been found. One is an American Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) and another is a Dwarf Hackberry (*Celtis tenuifolia*). The trees can be viewed online by going to the following link: www.fw.vt.edu/4h/bigtree/. Click on Virginia Big Tree Database and search by county – Arlington, Alexandria, or Fairfax. If you want to compare your county's trees with other big trees in the state, search by species. (Thanks to Arlington County naturalist, Greg Zell, for this information.)

FAIRFAX COUNTY'S INVASIVE MANAGEMENT AREA PROGRAM

The Fairfax County Park Authority's IMA (Invasive Management Area) Program is in full swing. They have had 11 workdays, plus multiple smaller events, removing a wide variety of invasive plants from English Ivy to Kudzu! Events are scheduled almost every weekend at local and neighborhood parks throughout the county. Join in on English Ivy removal at Woodglen Lake - or try your hand with a root jack to remove Japanese Barberry. Check out the program's website (www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/nrp-ima.htm) for more information about dates and locations.

Sat. July 8 Mason District Park

Sat. July 22 Idylwood Park

RSVP to Katherine.Frederick@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703 324 8681.

ARLINGTON'S RiP PROJECT

Sat. July 8 - Second Saturdays at Bluemont Park 9am - Noon. Neighbors and RiP volunteers will continue to meet at Bluemont Junction Park on second Saturdays. This section of woods beside the Bluemont Junction is being restored to a healthy forest, thanks to the efforts of volunteers who show up on Second Saturdays throughout the year to control invasive plants. A casual group and a lot of fun—be a part of it. Come help out for an hour or two. Great event to ride your bike to because work site is right beside the Bluemont Junction bike trail. Meet on south side of bike trail near N. Jefferson Street and 5th Street N. If driving, park near bike trail at the bottom of Illinois Street. Enter Illinois Street from Wilson Boulevard. Come help out for an hour or two. Meet at “the rocks” next to the bike trail. Contact John Huennkens at 524-3853, or jhuenn@gwu.edu.

Sat. Aug 12 - Second Saturdays at Bluemont Park 9am - Noon. pm (See above for details)

Note: Some training and tools provided. If you have your own gloves, clippers, loppers or dull flat screwdrivers, please bring them along to removal events. Long pants and long sleeves recommended. For information, please contact Jan Ferrigan, Invasive Species Program Coordinator at (703) 228 7636 or jferriga@vt.edu.

LOCAL EVENTS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:

Wed. July .5-July 26 Summer Wildflower Identification 7pm-9pm. Melanie Choukas Bradley. Woodend Sanctuary in Chevy Chase. Sponsored by Audubon Naturalist Society \$235 for non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

Thurs. Jul 13 (class) and Sat. July 15 (full day field trip) Wetland Plant Identification Class 7:30pm – 9:30pm. Cris Fleming, instructor. Classes at Woodend Sanctuary with a field trip at Jug Bay Sanctuary on the Patuxent River. Sponsored by Audubon Naturalist Society \$53 for non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

Sat. July 15 Wildflower Walk 5-6pm. Adults. Get to know your plant neighbors as you join us for a stroll through Long Branch Park. Learn folklore, ethnobotany, and other facts about our native (and some not-so-native) plants. Free. Registration required, register on-line <https://registration.co.arlington.va.us> or call 703-228-4747. Refer to Program #644442H. Meet at Long Branch Nature Center.

Sat. Jul. 29 Summer Wildflowers of Clark's Crossing Park, VA 9am -noon Dr. Stan Shetler. Sponsored by Audubon Naturalist Society \$25 for non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

Thurs. Aug. 3 and Sat. August 5 (full day field trip) Introduction to the Identification of Grasses Cris Fleming. Class 7:30-9:30. Field trip to Great Falls. Sponsored by Audubon Naturalist Society \$49 for non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

Sat. Aug 12 Dyke Marsh Invasives removal Alexandria, 10am to noon Call Brynnan Cox, of the Northern Virginia Senior Environment Corps at 703 -549-1607 Ext. 141 for information. Register near the bathrooms in Belle Haven Park (left of the parking lot). The National Park Service will provide all trash bags and gloves. Wear long pants, sturdy shoes, bug spray, and bring sunscreen. If working with invasive plants, wear a long-sleeve shirt

Sun. Aug. 27 Summer Wildflower Stroll 4-5:30pm. Adults. Join us to learn about the surprising array of wildflowers along our stream valley. Witness the late summer's blooms. Be prepared with rugged shoes and a water bottle. Free. Registration required, register on-line <https://registration.co.arlington.va.us> or call 703-228-4747. Refer to Program #643140B. Meet at Gulf Branch Nature Center.

SAVE THESE DATES**September 16 VNPS Fall Plant Sale at Green Spring Gardens celebrating Monarch Migration.****September 23-24 The Shenandoah Chapter is hosting the annual VNPS meeting this fall.****September 30 Potowmack Chapter Annual Meeting****Cole Burrell and his new book "Native Alternatives to Invasive Plants" Program and Book Signing****Invasives Control Work Parties at Turkey Run Park along the Potomac!**

This summer VNPS Potowmack chapter continues its work with The Nature Conservancy to help control invasive plant species on National Park Service lands in the Potomac Gorge at Turkey Run Park off the GW Memorial Parkway. Wear work gloves and boots or sturdy shoes, and bring water, snacks, and hand saws or loppers if you have them. You are always welcome to bring friends. Our schedule for July and August is:

Thursday, July 6, 10:00am - 1:00pm, Meet in C-2**Saturday, July 15, 10:00am - 1:00pm, Meet in C-2****Thursday, August 3, 10:00am - 1:00pm, Meet in C-2****Saturday, August 19, 10:00am - 1:00pm, Meet in C-2**

For information: Alan Ford; cell: 202.213.6196; email: amford@acm.org

**Chapter Events Calendar**

Aug 10 Board meeting 7:30

Sept. 16 Fall Plant Sale
Green Spring

Sept. 23 VNPS Annual
& 24 Meeting

Sept 30 Potowmack Chapter
Annual Meeting
With Cole Burrell
Native Alternatives
to Invasive Plants

**Potowmack Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
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