

SPRING

POTOWMACK NEWS

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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How Vines Climb: Woody Twiners

By Margaret Chatham



TWining VINES: DEXTRORSE ORIENTAL BITTERSWEET (CELASTRUS ORBICULATUS) CROSSES SINISTRORSE JAPANESE HONEYSUCKLE (LONICERA JAPONICA). ALL PHOTOS IN THIS ARTICLE BY MARGARET CHATHAM

“Tell me why the stars do shine, tell me why the ivy twines...” So says the old song, but of course naturalists & gardeners alike know that ivy doesn’t twine. So we’ll leave consideration of ivy for another day. This time around, I’m only dealing with woody twining vines.

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Upcoming

Alonso Abugattas Talk

**Piecing Together Nature’s Puzzle:
how our world depends on plants**

*Thursday, March 12, 7:30-9:30 pm
Green Spring Gardens Horticulture Center*

Spring Ephemerals Walk

Margaret Chatham at Scott’s Run
Sunday, March 22, 8:30-11:30 am

Dave Lawlor Talk

**Huntley Meadows: preserving
native plants**

*Thursday, April 9, 7:30-9:30 pm
Green Spring Gardens Horticulture Center*

Grass Bunch Walk

Dora Kelley Nature Park
Saturday, April 11, 9:30 am-12:30 pm

Charles Smith Walk

Conway Robinson State Forest
Saturday, April 18, 9:30 am-12:30 pm

**Trilliums with Alonso Abugattas
Thompson Wildlife M A**

Saturday, April 25, 9 am-2 pm

Arlington Champion Tree

Bike Ride led by Marty Nielson
Saturday, April 25, 1-4 pm

Sam Droege Talk

**How to Garden for Native,
Specialist Bees**

*Thursday, May 14, 7:30-9:30 pm
Green Spring Gardens Horticulture Center*

Nelson DeBarros Walk

Elklick Woodland Preserve
Saturday, May 2, 9:30 am-12:30 pm

Grass Bunch Walk

Confederate Fortifications
Sunday, May 17, 9:30 am-12:30 pm

*All events are free and open to the public.
Walks require preregistration. For email
notices of upcoming events, subscribe to
<https://vnps.groups.io/g/potowmack>. Or
send a blank email
to potowmack+subscribe@vnps.groups.io.*

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Yahoo Groups [vnps-pot] has moved to [Groups.io](https://groups.io)

The Potowmack Chapter has moved the Yahoo Groups [vnps-pot] email list to [Groups.io](https://groups.io), a replacement for Yahoo Groups. The Yahoo group is now closed, so please send all future email notices, discussion items, questions, etc. to potowmack@vnps.groups.io

The reasons are many, including that Yahoo no longer hosts message archives. Yahoo stopped offering customer support for Yahoo Groups some time ago, and there has been no public statement about the future of Yahoo Groups. Groupsio also offers better features and is easier to use - plus no advertisements.

All of the old [vnps-pot] Yahoo Group content has been copied to [Groups.io](https://groups.io) (messages, photos, etc.) and of course the list of subscribers (members). You won't have to do anything to continue receiving emails from the new group at [Groups.io](https://groups.io).

To access the new Potowmack archives and other content and to join the group, visit <https://vnps.groups.io/g/potowmack>.

Spring Native Plant Sales

(an incomplete list: for more listings, see <https://www.plantnovanatives.org/local-native-plant-sales>)

Sat, Mar 28, 8:30 am-2 pm National Arboretum Native Plant Sale, enter at 2400 R St NE, Washington, DC fona.org

Wednesdays, Apr 1, May 6, June 3, etc. 10 am-1 pm VNPS First Wednesday Plant Sales in the propagation beds behind the Horticulture Center at Green Spring Gardens Park vnps.org

Sat, Apr 4, 9 am-3 pm Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Spring Native Plant Sale 17195 Southern Planter Lane, Leesburg, VA loudounwildlife.org

Sat, Apr 25, 9 am-2 pm Northern Alexandria Native Plant Sale, 1701 N Quaker Ln, Alex, VA <http://www.northernalexandriannativeplantsale.org>.

Sat, Apr 25, 1-4 pm Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S Carlin Springs Rd, Arlington, VA parks.arlingtonva.us Some plants can be preordered at registration.arlingtonva.us

Sun, May 3, 10 am-2 pm Earth Sangha Spring Open House & Plant Sale north end of Cloud Dr, Springfield, VA earthsangha.org Plants may also be purchased Sunday, Monday & Thursday mornings when nursery work is happening

Sun, May 3, 10-2 Friends of Runnymede Park at 196 Herndon Parkway, Herndon: Plants from Watermark Woods & Nature By Design Nurseries

Sat, May 16, 9 am-3 pm Green Spring Garden Day brings in native plant vendors among others. Be sure to visit the VNPS propagation beds for our offerings behind the Horticulture Center. 4603 Green Spring Rd, Alexandria, VA <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/green-spring/events>

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

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VINES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

We have a number of woody twining vines in Northern Virginia, most of them invasive exotics. I like the statement (who originated it?) that vines are structural parasites, able to elongate quickly because they don't put their resources into holding themselves up. Twining vines show thigmotropic growth, growth influenced by contact. When a twining vine's growing tip touches something, growth on the contact side of the tip slows while growth on the non-contact side speeds up, so that the tip curls around the trunk, stem, fencepost, trellis, vine, or whatever it touched.

Each species has a preferred direction to spiral: dextrorse vines turn clockwise if viewed from the base upward, or following the right-hand rule (remember high school physics?) if the vine grows in the direction of your thumb, it turns in the direction of the curled fingers on your right hand. Sinistrorse vines follow the corresponding left hand rule. One genus where this becomes useful for identification is Wisteria. Japanese wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*) is sinistrorse while Chinese wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*) is dextrorse. See it below, twining around itself and some long dead & decayed sapling at Turkey Run. American wisteria (*Wisteria frutescens*) is also dextrorse, as seen on page 6 under word of the month. It is native to southeastern Virginia, but locally is limited to planted and escaped vines of a midwestern variety. Both native Coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) and far more prevalent Japanese honeysuckle (*L. japonica*) are sinistrorse.

Most twining vines tighten their hold on their support as vine and tree grow, creating the spiral walking sticks made from saplings strangled by Japanese honeysuckle. An exception is our native Moonseed (*Menispermum canadense*), shown at right, which somehow manages to let its supporting tree grow unmarred. It also illustrates my first-glance "is it a native vine" ID feature: dark bark, expect it to be native; light bark, expect it to be exotic. Always check further, but this is a place to start.



ABOVE RIGHT: MOONSEED (MENISPERMUM CANADENSE) LOOSELY TWINING, DEXTRORSE, DARK BARK. BELOW: CHINESE WISTERIA (WISTERIA SINENSIS) TWINING AROUND ITSELF AND SOME LONG DEAD & GONE SAPLING.



“Leaves of Three, Let It Be!”

That’s the old saying about poison ivy, but there are lots of other plants with three leaflets. How many of these can you identify? Answers on page 6

- 1 Boxelder (*Acer negundo*)
- 2 Dewberry (*Rubus flagellaris*)
- 3 Black Raspberry (*Rubus occidentalis*)
- 4 Blackberry (*Rubus pensilvanicus*)
- 5 Bladdernut (*Staphylea trifolia*)
- 6 Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*)



B



A



C



F



E



D

Stages of Learning Invasive Plants

By Jan Meyer

I became involved in the invasive plant world in 2006 when I joined a team led by John Dodge that was to survey the Invasive Management Area sites of Fairfax County Park. This was the first year of the IMA program and we surveyed about 20 sites a year for ten years. At the beginning I noticed my reactions to learning invasive plants and then later noticed other people had the similar experiences.

Stage One

This is when you are first introduced to the topic of invasive plants. You learn about why they are bad and how they impact the native habitat. You learn some of the more common invasives, such as Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*), Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) and Japanese Stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*). Most people probably already know English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) which is also on the list of common invasives.

At this stage, a sad realization occurs. Whenever you go to a park, you begin noticing how many invasive plants there are. You see so many that it is hard to enjoy your walk. You feel that something should be done. You volunteer for an invasive removal work day. You feel a little better that you are making a difference and you have saved a dogwood tree (*Cornus florida*) from being strangled by a Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) vine.

Stage Two

In this stage you continue to learn more common invasives, like Bush Honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*), Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), Japanese Honeysuckle, and Winged Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus*).

Now when you go for a walk in a park, you are not surprised to see invasives. But you are surprised to learn the park landscapers use Japanese Barberry, English Ivy and Liriope (*Liriope spp.*) in their landscaping. How can this be? Surely park employees should know to plant natives.

You continue to help at invasive workdays and see that continued effort can make a difference. You read Doug Tallamy's book *Bringing Nature Home*. You renew your effort in planting natives, not only to increase the native plant population, but to increase the corresponding native butterfly, insect and bird populations, too.

Stage Three

The rate of learning new invasives has slowed. Your garden has lots of native plants. You begin to talk to friends and neighbors about the value of native plants and the harmful effects of the non-native invasives.

Still, there are surprises in store. On a trip to Hawaii, you are sad to learn that almost all the plants you see are non-natives. You find it very difficult even to visit the native forests and habitats.

Then you learn the Virginia Highway Department has been planting Crown Vetch (*Securigera* or *Coronilla varia*), Multiflora Rose and Tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) for decades along the roads in Virginia.

Back in Fairfax, you begin to ignore the invasives and enjoy the native plants, butterflies and birds. You accept the fact the invasives are here. In the long run, you hope that park staff and volunteers will be able to keep the invasives in check. Even better if there are insects that could control the invasive plant populations.

Stage Four

The last stage is somewhat debatable. You see a patch of pretty invasives, such as Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*) or a few purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) and you find yourself enjoying their beauty. Even though you wish they weren't there, you see that they are part of nature. Of course, you still dream of invasive-free natural areas and yards.

(Editor's note: Maybe I haven't reached Stage Four yet. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. When I see Purple Loosestrife, in the mangled words of Shakespeare, I see a landscape sicklied o'er with the purple cast of death.)

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Word of the Month: Circumnutation



Circumnutation: originally, Darwin's term for the motion of a vine tip "searching" for a support, now generalized to mean growing around or twining as a vine.

Shown here, dextrorse *Wisteria frutescens*, American Wisteria, growing around itself. (Dextrorse & sinistrorse were words of the month back in January of 2016.)

Photo by Margaret Chatham

Answers to page 4 Leaves of three:

- 1 E (note opposite branching)
- 2 C (trailing with rooting tip, trip you up!)
- 3 A (note glaucous stem)
- 4 B (this is a young one)
- 5 D (also opposite)
- 6 F (don't touch!)