

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 24, No.1

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Jan/Feb. 2006

“NATIVE SHRUBS FOR THE GARDEN” THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 7:30 P.M.

From native azaleas to viburnums and sumac, shrubs native to the eastern U.S. feature spring flowers, fruit for wildlife, and colorful fall foliage. Learn about the best native shrubs for the home landscape from Joan Feely, curator of the Fern Valley Native Plant Collection at the U.S. National Arboretum. Whether you're gardening for birds, butterflies, beauty, or all three, native shrubs will enhance your landscape. Joan has worked at the arboretum since 1986 and is responsible for the National Grove of State Trees and a 3-acre forest restoration project adjacent to the Arboretum's Beech Woods. Door prize: native shrub.

“BIODIVERSITY THROUGH WEED CONTROL AT TURKEY RUN PARK” THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 7:30P.M.

Chapter volunteers have diligently been working since March 2005 on habitat restoration through weed control at Turkey Run Park. Mary Traviglini, our dynamic project coordinator, will talk about invasives I.D. and control methods used at the park. Ms. Traviglini is the Potomac Gorge Habitat Restoration Manager for the Nature Conservancy. She focuses on control of non-native invasive plants and restoration of rare groundwater invertebrate habitats in one of the most biodiverse land holdings of the National Park Service. Be inspired by her energy and learn how you can become a part of this effort in 2006.

Both programs will be held at Green Spring Gardens: From Interstate 395, exit at Route 236 West (Little River Turnpike); turn right at Braddock Road and go 1 block north to park entrance.

WINTER TREE ID WALK, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2 TO 3:30P.M.

On the Potomac Palisades in north Arlington, Potomac Overlook Park offers 100 acres of peaceful woodland. Enjoy the beauty of winter woods with Naturalist Richard Bailey who will lead a field trip for our chapter focusing on Winter Tree Identification. Learn to identify the park's 15 common tree species and some of the less common ones as well. Dress appropriately for the weather. Potomac Overlook Park is located off Military Rd at 2845 N. Marcey Road in Arlington. From the parking area near the tennis courts, it is a short walk down the paved path to the nature center where we'll meet. Questions: call 703-920-1913.

VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY ANNUAL WORKSHOP, MARCH 11, 2006

The VNPS annual workshop will be held on Saturday March 11th at the University of Richmond. The title of this year's workshop is “**Planting the Wild: Links between Cultivation and Conservation.**” The conference will focus on the connections between gardening for conservation and restoration while exploring what constitutes a truly natural landscape. Featured speakers include William Brumback, Conservation Director, New England Wildflower Society; Stanwyn G. Shetler, Ph.D., Curator of Botany Emeritus, Botany, Smithsonian Institution; Rick Myers, Stewardship Manager, the Virginia Natural Heritage Program; and Deborah Barber, Director of Land Management and Volunteer Programs, The Nature Conservancy, Maryland/D.C. Chapter. The workshop will begin with coffee and registration at 9 a.m. and programs run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Look for registration information in the next *Bulletin*.

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE:

Happy New Year, everyone. At this time of reflection and new beginnings, I was thinking of the amazing plant life of our region, how varied and even mysterious it is. From skunk cabbage blooming in the snow to the fleeting beauty of spring ephemerals, plants have their own unique characteristics and an often hidden role in the larger ecology of natural areas. Unfortunately, they're frequently overlooked by the general public who just see green. It's recognition of the value of native plants that is one of the driving forces of VNPS. We do our best to draw attention to their importance through programs, walks, and outreach efforts. With so many species from pollinators to migratory birds depending on the health of our ecosystems, it's up to us to try and help on a local level. So when you get a chance to speak up for the plants, please do it! Hope to see you all at our meetings this winter.

Marianne Mooney

FREE ADMISSION TO THE MAYMONT FLOWER SHOW FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Pocahontas Chapter will be hosting an information booth for VNPS at the Maymont Flower Show February 9 to 12, 2006. Volunteers are needed to work at the booth in 3-hour shifts at the Greater Richmond Convention Center (405 North 3rd St. Richmond, VA 23219). Volunteers will receive one pass good for free admission and parking. Three-hour shifts are available for morning, afternoon, and evening hours. This will be a great opportunity to share information about VNPS, the use of native plants in landscaping and as alternatives to invasive plants, conservation issues, the Flora of VA project, and other related topics. Call Daune Poklis 804-7417838 or Daune@Poklis.org for more information.

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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.

POTOWMACK NEWS EDITOR NEEDED

Mary Ann Lawler, our dedicated newsletter editor for the past 5 years, needs to resign for family reasons. We're hoping someone will volunteer to replace her. Skills needed include familiarity with Microsoft WORD or similar program, some writing and editing knowledge, and an interest in native plants and conservation. If interested, please contact Marianne Mooney at m.mooney@comcast.net or call 703-534-8179.

WANT TO JOIN THE CHAPER LISTSERV? Send an e-mail to stoness@si.edu and in the message section write subscribe to vnps-pot, your e-mail address, and your full name. Or visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/vnps-pot/join>

AN ALIEN INVADER SPAWNS A SPECIES

By Robert C. Cowen Reproduced with permission from the Aug 4, 2005 issue of *The Christian Science Monitor*, (www.csmonitor.com) ©2005 *The Christian Science Monitor*. All rights reserved.

When loosestrife covers a wetland with purple flowers, it flaunts the invasive power of alien plants. While scientists have barely begun to understand the full ecological impact of alien plant invasions, the global mixing of plants and animals now going on could be a major channel for unplanned environmental change.

The ecological alterations that an aggressive alien may bring vary. It can co-opt soil microbes to enhance its growth. It can deny native animals their natural food and shelter. It can create a new wildfire hazard as alien grasses are doing in some North American deserts. New research shows it can even help a new insect species to emerge.

Research on one familiar alien, the Japanese honeysuckle, reported last week in *Nature* magazine, illustrates this point. People brought the bushy honeysuckle to North America more than 250 years ago. The US Department of Agriculture began promoting it as a garden and wildlife plant in 1880. The plant, which produces a berry-size fruit, is now part of the wild flora of the Northeastern United States.

The tephritid fruit fly loves this kind of plant. In fact, there's a fly species specifically adapted to exploit each species of berry-producing plants. For instance, the blueberry fly goes through its entire life cycle on blueberry bushes. It can't live on any other type of plant. That's how the fly-plant relationship has evolved naturally.

The Japanese honeysuckle also has its fly. But that fly didn't originate with the plant. A Pennsylvania State University research team traced its ancestry to a hybrid produced by flies that live on blueberry and snowberry plants, respectively. Normally, such a hybrid fly strain would die out. It can't compete with either of its parent species on their host plants. Honeysuckle offered a niche with no such competition where the hybrid became a new species. The family outcast found an empty house on the block and moved in.

The research team calls this development "a novel example of how invasive weeds can influence the evolution of native fauna."

Research team leader Dietmar Schwarz and his colleagues say their findings also illustrate how man-made changes can "offer new opportunities for hybridization" as previously isolated organisms come into contact with each other.

The ecological changes brought about by the Japanese honeysuckle also give a new perspective on animal evolution. The rise of species through hybridization is common in plants. But zoologists have considered it rare in animals. "There might be a lot more animal hybrid species than previously thought if researchers take a closer look," Dr. Schwarz says.

The subtle changes that invasive species bring locally may combine globally in ways that profoundly affect Earth's web of organic life. That's why ecologists, including Peter Moore at King's College in London, have called for vigorous international research to find out what's going on.

Dr. Moore has noted, for example, that increasing concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere might favor growth of an invasive weed over native plants. He warned last year in an essay in *Nature* that the influence wrought by invasive species could fuel an "explosion" of ecological change "to levels beyond all expectation."

LOCAL EVENTS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:

CATERPILLAR COMBAT TACTICS

Thursday, January 26; 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. Adults. Join members of the Washington Area Butterfly Club for their monthly meeting featuring Dick Smythe from the Fairfax Audubon Society. He will discuss the many ways caterpillars have of defending themselves from predators. Free. Reservations required, register on-line <https://registration.co.arlington.va.us/> or call 703-228-4747. Reference program # 624403A. Meet at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Rd., Arlington, VA 22204.

DYKE MARSH INVASIVES REMOVAL AND CLEAN-UP

Alexandria, January 21st from 9:00-12:00, February 11th from 10:00-12:00, and March 11th from 10:00-12:00. Our January cleanup will be held in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Register near the bathrooms in Belle Haven Park (left of the parking lot). Trash bags and gloves provided. For information call Brynna Cox, Outreach Coordinator, The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, 703-549-1607, ext.141 or e-mail him at bcox@compagnacenter.org.

ENDANGERED IN VIRGINIA

Tuesday, February 7; 7:30 - 8:30 p.m. Adults. Virginia Sneezeweed in peril! Roanoke Loggerch in danger! Well, these headlines may not be rocking the local papers. Not all endangered species lead glamorous lives in exotic locations. Join us to learn about some truly fascinating plants and animals struggling to make it, right nearby. Free. Reservations required, register on-line <https://registration.co.arlington.va.us> or call 703-228-4747. Reference program # 624453A. Meet at Gulf Branch Nature Center, 3608 Military Rd., Arlington, VA 22207.

LUBBER RUN INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL

Saturday, February 18, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. Meet at the parking area of Lubber Run Amphitheater, N. Columbus at N. Second St., Arlington. Sponsored by the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust and Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment.

BUTTERFLY GARDENING

Thursday, February 23; 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. Adults. Join members of the Washington Area Butterfly Club in their popular annual program on butterfly gardening. This year the featured speaker is renowned garden author and designer Cole Burrell. Among his many books, his *Gardener’s Encyclopedia of Wildflowers* won the American Horticultural Society’s Book Award. Free. Reservations required, register on-line <https://registration.co.arlington.va.us> or call 703-228-4747. Reference program # 624454A. Meet at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Rd., Arlington, VA 22204.

ECOSAVVY GARDENING SYMPOSIUM: TECHNIQUES FOR KEEPING OUR PLANET HEALTHY

Saturday, February 25, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. at Green Spring Gardens. For homeowners, landscape professionals, and Master Gardeners. Topics will be Native Alternatives to Invasive Plants, Protecting the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, Growing more than Grass, and The 5 Essential Practices of Organic Gardening. To register call the park at 703-642-5173.

WINTER TREE IDENTIFICATION

Saturday, March 4, 9 a.m. 3 p.m. Cris Fleming lectures on how to identify trees in winter on the grounds of the National Audubon Society’s Woodend Sanctuary in Chevy Chase, MD. The lecture begins inside with a look at techniques and then moves outdoors to study woody plants on the grounds. Members \$28; nonmembers \$39. Call 301-652-9188 ext 16 for more information.



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

Chapter Events Calendar

- Jan. 12 Board meeting 6:45
Growing Native
Shrubs Program
7:30 Green Spring
- Feb. 9 Board meeting 6:45
Biodiversity
Through Weed
Control Program
7:30 Green Spring
- Feb. 25 Winter Tree I.D.
Walk 2pm Potomac
Overlook Park
- Mar. 11 State Workshop
Richmond

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