

# POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 20, No 2

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Mar/Apr 2002

## **AH SPRING! DON'T MISS THE WONDROUS WALKS AND EXCELLENT LECTURES** **Thursday, March 7: Bryophytes and Lichens Conservation--Global and Local Considerations**

Flowering plants like the Flowering Dogwood, *Cornus florida*, or Virginia bluebells, *Mertensia virginiana*, are easy to appreciate when walking through the woods, because they are large and have showy flowers. However, many intriguing woodland natives are quite diminutive and require a careful eye to spot. Learn about mosses, liverworts, and hornworts (the bryophytes) and about lichens from **Leah McDonald Oliver** a research assistant in the botany department of NatureServe (formerly the Association for Biodiversity Information) at 7:30 PM at Green Spring Gardens Park

Bryophytes and lichens are good indicators of environmental health, contributing significantly to the global carbon cycle. On a local level, the restoration and conservation of these plant groups is important because they provide homes to many animals, are good indicators of air and water pollution, and are vital components of landscape biodiversity.

*Directions to Green Spring Gardens Park: From Interstate 395, exit at Route 236 West (Little River Turnpike) in Alexandria, turn right at Green Spring Road and proceed 1 block north to the park entrance.*

## **Saturday, April 6: Member Walk with Cris Fleming at Turkey Run Park**

Botany chair **Cris Fleming** will lead a chapter walk at **Turkey Run Park** from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm. We'll look for the earliest spring wildflowers such as harbinger-of-spring, bloodroot, twinleaf, leatherwood, sessile trillium, and both yellow and white trout-lily. Come prepared for moderately rugged terrain and wet areas including a rocky stream crossing. Dress accordingly. Meet at parking lot C1. To register, call Cris at 301-657-9289. Please include your telephone number and the number of people registering, if you leave a message. Registration is limited to 16 people because of the sensitivity of the area. The trip will be cancelled if there is heavy rain, but not for drizzle.

*Turkey Run Park is located off the section of the George Washington Memorial Parkway between the Beltway and Rt. 123. Exits are well marked coming from either direction.*



Cris Fleming

## **Saturday, April 20: Member Walk with Dr. Stan Shetler at Great Falls Park**



Dr. Stan Shetler

Join Smithsonian Botanist Emeritus **Stan Shetler** on a walk at **Great Falls Park, VA**, on Saturday, April 20, 2 - 4:30 PM. Come see the diverse spring flora of the Potomac Gorge in this unique setting. Whether it's the demure round-lobed hepatica (*Hepatica americana*) or flashy green-and-gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*) will depend on the pace of the season, but, regardless, you will be delighted to see the great palette of wildflowers in this heavily visited park. Meet at the Visitors Center between the two buildings. The walk will only be canceled for heavy rain. Limit 20. To register, call Shirley Gay at (703) 920-1913. Please include your telephone number if you leave a message.

*Directions: From the Beltway, take Route 193 West and proceed about 2 miles. Turn right at the sign for Great Falls Park and proceed another mile to the park entrance.*

## **Saturday, May 4: The Conservation Collection at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens**

Save this date for a tour of Meadowlark Botanical Gardens with its collection of native plants of the Potomac River Valley, led by Park Administrator, **Keith Tomlinson**. Look for details in our next issue.

**PRESIDENTS MESSAGE:**

In everything our chapter board does, we strive for balance between appreciation of our native flora and highlighting its threats. As we get closer to spring, seeking out the earliest ephemerals becomes a wonderful quest. But we will still be mindful of what we need to do to protect our flora, from educating and lobbying our officials, to supporting local invasives eradication efforts. Multiply our support, by introducing someone you know to the botanical wonders of spring, and by helping in efforts to reduce the invasives population. Thanks, **Marianne Mooney**

**GARDENING AROUND THE FALL LINE**

**by Marianne Mooney**

January's program featured Bill McLaughlin of the U.S. Botanic Garden who treated our chapter to the quintessential native plant gardening talk. We saw slides of plants in their native habitats, learned the specifics of those habitats and judged their suitability for the home garden.

Throughout the evening, the emphasis was on the importance of preserving natural plant communities.

Bill based his talk on the unique geology of our fall-line location; we have one foot in the Coastal Plain and the other in the Piedmont. From the spring ephemerals of our rocky slopes to the carnivorous plants of the pine savannahs, we have a fabulous diversity of plant life in our region. That very diversity limits what plants can be grown in the garden due mainly to differences in soil types. The plants of the Piedmont reach their furthest movement to the coast in our area where the soils are mainly clay.

With a wealth of plants to choose from, Bill focused on some lesser-used garden possibilities. A beautiful shrub, *Dirca palustris* (leatherwood), was especially recommended as were *Carex sp.* (sedges). And I'm sure those who saw it wanted the *Talinum teretifolium* (fame flower) in their personal collection.

Down on the Coastal Plain, the soils are an acidic, unconsolidated mix of sand, clay and gravel. There are found some of the region's most endangered habitats due particularly to development pressures and lumbering. Bill showed us the dry longleaf pine woods where the *Pinus palustris* is attended by the garden-worthy *Quercus incana* (bluejack oak) and *Q. marilandica* (blackjack oak). A wetter pinewoods habitat is the pocosin, an elevated, acidic bog dominated by *Pinus serotina* and evergreen shrubs. In the pine savannahs, one finds many carnivorous plants like *Sarracenia flava* (pitcher plant) that can be grown in the garden with a little work.

Traveling farther east on the Coastal Plain to the stabilized dune habitat, we met one of Bill's personal favorites, *Ilex vomitoria* (Yaupon holly). Its young leaves and twigs are roasted to make yaupon tea while the shrub itself makes a beautiful garden statement. Mix in a *Ceanothus americanus* (New Jersey tea) and *Oxydendrum arboreum* (sourwood) and you have a wonderful, botanical brew.

We appreciate Bill coming out and sharing his insights with almost 100 people. For those seeking some of the plants mentioned that night, here are a few sources recommended by Bill: Carolina Greenery in North Carolina, 910-947-3150 or carolinagreenery.com; Sunlight Gardens in Tennessee, 800-272-7396 or sunlightgardens.com; We-Du Nurseries in N.C., 828-738-8300 or we-du.com.

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(All numbers should include the 703 area code, unless otherwise noted.) <i>Potowmack News</i> 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.		

**FROM TRILLIUMS TO TROUT LILIES—THE LILIACEAE by Mary Ann Lawler**

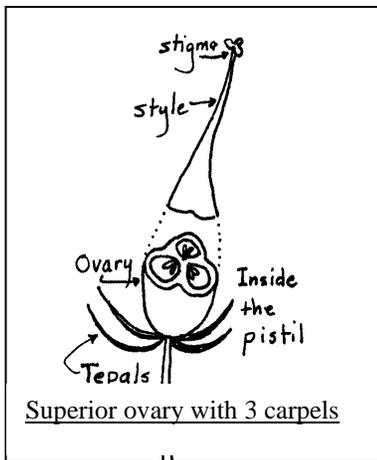
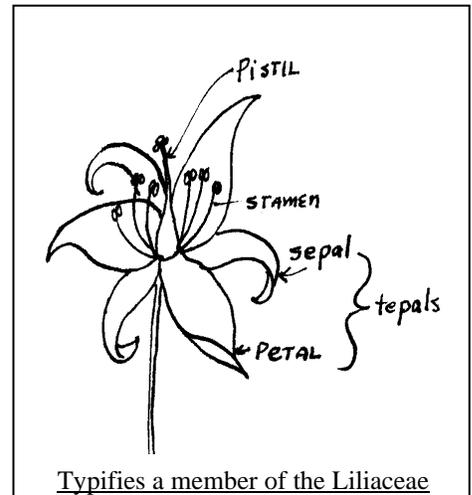
Some of our favorite spring flowering native plants belong to the lily family—the Liliaceae (lily-AY-see-ay). Members of this plant family are monocotyledons; only one leaf initially sprouts from the seed. The nearly 4,000 species of Liliaceae worldwide consist mostly of perennial herbs arising from bulbs, rhizomes, corms or tubers. As with other “monocots,” they generally have flat, toothless, parallel-veined leaves—the crossing-veins in the leaves of the trillium are an exception to this general rule. But as we know, leaves are not the easiest way to identify plants. We have to look at the flowers.



Trilliums cover the forest floor at the Thompson in Linden, VA

How can we tell if a flower is a member of the lily family? First we must think in threes. Monocots generally have flower parts that are in threes or sixes. Liliaceae flowers have three sepals and three petals that often look alike. The petal-like sepals of lilies and tulips are good examples. A flower in this family has six stamens. Its pistil, if sliced crossways, reveals an ovary with three sections (carpels).

Another distinguishing feature of a member of the lily family is its “superior” ovary. That means that the ovary resides above the point where the sepals and petals open out from the stem. Compare a daffodil with a tulip, which is in the lily family. On a daffodil note that the bulge at the bottom of the pistil, which indicates the site of the ovary, is below (inferior to) the point where the sepals and petals (tepals) flare out from the stem. A tulip’s ovary is clearly above that point—and thus is superior. See the illustration below left.



Another characteristic of members of the lily family is alternate, basal or whorled leaves on the stem. Fruits of plants in the lily family are capsules or berries.

Look for members of the lily family this spring. Trout lilies (*Erythronium sp.*) are perfect examples of the Liliaceae. They grow from a bulb. Their long, smooth leaves with parallel veins can be seen before the flowers. The six tepals look alike. The Yellow trout lily (*Erythronium americanum*) is most abundant. But keep a careful eye out for the White trout lily (*Erythronium albidum*), it is considered rare in Virginia, but has been found in Fairfax and Arlington counties.

A trillium’s three large petals fairly shout “monocot.” The three green sepals are quite obvious below the petals. The ovary above the three petals and three sepals is further evidence that it is a member of the Liliaceae.

The little flowers of Smooth solomon’s seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*) are bell-shaped, but they, too, are in the same family. Note the six-parted flower and the parallel veins of the alternating, smooth leaves, hinting at its heritage. (Continued on page 4)

**THE LILIACEAE (Continued from page 3)**

Bellworts or merrybells (*Uvalaria sp.*) are other good examples of the Liliaceae. The smooth, lush leaves are nearly as lovely as the flowers. Like the trout lily, their three petals and three sepals look alike. The superior ovary and six stamens are typical of the Lily family.

One abundant plant in this family, which you might overlook but could be growing in your backyard, is the prickly vine, *Smilax rotundifolia*, or Common greenbrier. You may have never seen the flowers, they are so inconspicuous; but the smooth, parallel-veined leaves point to their kinship with others in the lily family along with that bulbous rhizome, which is so hard to pull out.

A good flora or wildflower guide will give the most common of the Liliaceae in our area. Take along a field guide on one of our walks this spring, and see how many Lilies you can find.

**LEARN PLANTS BY VOLUNTEERING by Laura Beaty and Beth Smith**

Spring is on its way, or it better be, because the chapter's propagation beds at Green Spring Gardens Park will open in early April. Like last year, volunteers will be working in the beds Wednesday and Saturday mornings. We would love to meet some new volunteers.

If you would like to get involved, please give us a call and we can give you more information. Keep in mind that an interest in plants is all you need. Learning about native plants, cleaning beds, digging and dividing plants and potting plants for our sales results in on-the-job-training for you.

Another benefit of volunteering is meeting other great volunteers and learning about related activities. April 3 will be our first workday at the propagation beds and the Spring plant sale will be May 18. We have about six weeks to prepare for the sale so we have some fun ahead of us. Those of you who can't help out at the beds can help the chapter by donating plants to the sale.

As you begin cleaning out your flowerbeds this spring, set aside any seedlings that have emerged in an unwelcome place. We would welcome any native perennials, ferns, shrubs or small trees. Let us know if you need help getting them to us. Bring them to our beds on Wednesday or Saturday mornings or just leave them on the benches behind the potting table. Please put your name and telephone number on the donations so that we can thank you. Here's hoping that you find lots of unwelcome treasures in your garden. See you at the beds or the sale and please call us if you need more information.

Laura Beaty 703-534-8746 or Beth Smith 703-644-1760

**DR. DOUGLAS GILL'S WORK FEATURED AT U.S. BOTANIC GARDENS**

On January 19, 2002, the newly renovated US Botanic Gardens located on Independence Avenue NW in the District of Columbia opened a new educational exhibit on the ALLURE OF ORCHIDS, highlighted by a center exhibit featuring the University of Maryland's Dr. Douglas E. Gill, Professor of Biology, and his 25-year study of the Pink lady's slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*). A DVD video, featuring Doug as narrator and images from his research, will play continuously until April 7, 2002. An 8' x 12' mural/photo of his research site in the George Washington National Forest, and a real-life diorama serve as backdrops.

Dr. Gill spoke to Chapter members about his work last April at Hidden Oaks Nature Center. We think it's great that the Botanic Garden has included native orchids in its exhibit. And the fascinating story of Dr. Gill's research makes it all the more exciting. After years of tracking a large population of Pink lady's slipper orchids, Dr. Gill had a major breakthrough that has led to a completely new understanding of the ecology of the orchid.



Dr. Gill with *Cypripedium acaule*

### **TREE STEWARDS TAKE ON INVASIVES IN ARLINGTON COUNTY and ALEXANDRIA**

The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, the parks departments of Arlington and Alexandria, and the Virginia Department of Forestry recently trained about 25 volunteer Tree Stewards. Some new stewards agreed to take the lead in removing invasive, exotic plants in three parks in Arlington. As English ivy vines represent the most virulent threat, the Stewards asked the County to apply triclopyr to ivy on the ground during the Aug. 15-Nov. 15 period, as recommended by National Park Service specialists.

The demonstration parks include Lacey Woods Park (N. Arlington), led by Nora Palmatier 703-527-2349; Ft. Scott Park (S. Arlington), led by Donald Clarke 703-979-7414; and Lubber Run Park (Central Arlington), led by Paul Kovenock 703-525-5221. Next activity: **Mar. 23, 9:30** am to 12:00 noon at Lubber Run. (*Meet at Lubber Run Amphitheater parking lot at corner of N. Columbus St. and N. 2nd St. Please wear protective clothing. Bring some hand tools, such as pruners, loppers, screwdrivers or small saws. Gloves provided. For more information contact Paul Kovenock 525-5221 or Sylvia Orli 528-5618.*)

In the City of Alexandria, South Four Mile Run park is one of the project sites selected. Anyone wishing to be informed of future Tree Steward activities may join a listserve by sending an e-mail to: [tree\\_stewards-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:tree_stewards-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

### **LEARNING ABOUT INVASIVE REMOVAL TECHNIQUES IN ROCK CREEK PARK**

Tree Stewards, local park personnel, VNPS members and the general public were eager to ask questions after Sue Salmons, a natural resource specialist with the National Park Service working in Rock Creek Park, gave her presentation at the February 14 chapter program. Ms. Salmons presented a solid case of how it is possible to restore an area overrun with porcelain berry, English ivy, wisteria, honeysuckle and other invasives to a natural woodland setting with native plants.

She said invasive exotic plants change soil chemistry, hydrology, and especially plant diversity. She described a four-year effort in which park personnel attacked invasive vines with sprays containing triclopyr. It will remain an ongoing effort. For specific exotic weed control information see: <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/> or <http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/>.

### **MILE-A-MINUTE UPDATE**

Of course we should have known. Contrary to what we said in the last issue, Virginia's Department of Conservation and Recreation does include Mile-a-minute weed on its list of invasive plants. In fact it's listed as highly invasive. But it's mistakenly listed under herbaceous plants rather than vines, so we didn't see it. Check out DCR's fact sheet on this exotic pest at: <http://www.dcr.state.va.us/dnh/invlist.htm>.

### **DATES TO KEEP IN MIND:**

**March 24: Native Azaleas in the Southern Appalachian Highlands** 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm. Administration Building Auditorium, National Arboretum. Jim Gears, President of the Valley Forge Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, will present a program about flame azaleas along the Appalachian Trail. Free admission and free seedling.

**March 30 Early Spring Wildflowers (white trout lily, harbinger of spring, twinleaf....)** Audubon Naturalist Society; Leader Cris Fleming. 9 am to 3 pm Great Falls & Difficult Run. \$24 non-members. For information: 301-652-9188 x16

**April 5, 19, May 3 Spring Wildflowers of the Potomac River Valley (Carderock, Scott's Run, Great Falls)** Audubon Naturalist Society; Leader Cris Fleming. \$18 ea or \$28 for all 3 non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

**April 13: Botany Training at Dyke Marsh** (plus invasive removal) 10-Noon. Sponsored by The Northern Virginia Senior Environment Corps. For information call Sarah Derico @ 703-549-1607 or e-mail her at [NVSEC\\_RSVP@aol.com](mailto:NVSEC_RSVP@aol.com)

**April 18: Bluebells at Bull Run** 10 am to 1 pm Audubon Naturalist Society \$20 non-members. For information: 301-652-9188 x16

WANT TO JOIN THE CHAPTER LISTSERV? Send an e-mail to Sylvia Orli at [stone.sylvia@nrmh.si.edu](mailto:stone.sylvia@nrmh.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>

**NATIVE PLANTS ONLINE:** If you go to:  
[http://wildflower.avatartech.com/Plants\\_Online/index2.html](http://wildflower.avatartech.com/Plants_Online/index2.html)

you will find the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's national portal for native plant information. This online resource is packed with free native plant information, such as an online database of more than 1,000 native plant species, a national directory of more than 2,000 landscapers with experience using native plants, a national directory of native plant and seed suppliers, and downloadable fact sheets from the Wildflower Center's Clearinghouse. These fact sheets include regional recommended species lists, native plant bibliographies, and native plant organizations lists. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center seeks to inspire people of all ages to reconnect themselves to the land by providing them with the tools and resources they need to understand their ecological heritage, become better ecological citizens, and secure a sound ecological future.

**Virginia Native Plant Society Annual Workshop ~ March 9, 2002**

**VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANTS RECLAIMING VIRGINIA'S ROADSIDES, HILLS AND HOME LANDSCAPES**  
**Re-establishing natural communities on Virginia's disturbed land using Native Plants**

*Reclamation, restoration, revegetation, reintroducing native plants into Virginia's disturbed land at home, along highways, in mined areas and natural lands ~ how it is done and how effective is it as a solution for the imprint of society? Whether you are a homeowner, landowner of large areas, natural resources manager, avocational or professional botanist, our speakers will give you ideas concerning restoring your suburban yard or meadow, the latest research for best suited native plants for severely altered land, efforts in natural areas to protect rare species and ordinary plant communities, and a perspective about reclamation as a form of gardening.*

**Speakers: Jody Booze-Daniels, W. Lee Daniels, Deanne Eversmeyer, Stanwyn Shetler, John Townsend,**  
**University of Richmond Gottwald Auditorium Richmond, Virginia 8:30 – 3:30 \$24 members/\$45 non-members**

**See the VNPS website ([www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org)) for details and registration form**

**ATTENTION LANDSCAPERS SPECIALIZING IN USE OF NATIVE PLANTS.** Because we get often get requests for such information, we want to update our list of landscape designers who use native plants. Please send an e-mail to [rdaymell@aol.com](mailto:rdaymell@aol.com) if you would like to be included on such a list.

<b><u>Chapter Events Calendar</u></b>		<p><b>Potowmack Chapter</b>  <b>Virginia Native Plant Society</b>  <b>P.O. Box 5311</b>  <b>Arlington, VA 22205</b></p> <p><i>Please verify your address information and your renewal date on the mailing label.</i></p> <p><i>Printed on recycled paper</i></p>	
Mar.	7		Brd. Meet. 6:45 PM Program 7:30 pm Green Spring Park
April	6		Cris Fleming's Turkey Run Walk 9:30am - 12:30pm
April	11		Brd. Meet. 7:30 pm Green Spring Park
April	20		Stan Shetler's Great Falls Walk 2-4
April	28		VNPS Garden Tour (details next issue)
May	4		Conservation Collection 2 – 4 at Meadowlark Gardens
May	18	Plant Sale	