

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 20, No 1

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Jan/Feb 2002

EDUCATIONAL, ENTERTAINING, AND FREE: PROGRAMS FOR THE NEW YEAR

Thursday, January 10: A Split Personality: Flora on the Fall Line.

Bill McLaughlin of the United States Botanic Garden will speak and present slides about the flora of the fall line at 7:30 PM at Green Spring Gardens Park. The Washington metropolitan area straddles the Piedmont and Coastal Plain, each with a distinctive topography and flora. This program will explore the personalities of the plant communities in each area, and discover the richness of possibilities they hold for gardeners.

A University of Maryland Graduate, Bill McLaughlin has worked for over 15 years as a horticulturist at the U.S. Botanic Garden. His current specialty is in cultivating plants of the mid-Atlantic and Southeastern U.S. By 2004 the newly renovated Botanic Garden will be featuring a regional showcase garden of native plants from the Piedmont and Coastal Plain.

Thursday, February 14: Invasive Exotic Plants in Rock Creek Park.

Learn how a Federal Government agency is addressing the invasive plant problems affecting natural areas locally. Sue Salmons of the National Park Service will give a talk at 7:30 PM about how non-native plants have invaded Rock Creek Park, how they damage the ecosystem, and what we have learned about controlling them. Rock Creek Park is an urban gem bisecting the District of Columbia with greenspace.

Sue is currently a Specialist for Rock Creek Park, with responsibility for documenting and maintaining the health of habitats and ecosystems within the park as well as coordinating inventory, monitoring and research of natural resources. Sue has worked in the field of environmental management for 21 years.

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.

KEEPING A SHARP LOOKOUT FOR MILE-A-MINUTE

Mile-a-minute weed (*Polygonum perfoliatum* L.) is not yet listed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation among troublesome invasive exotic plants, but it soon could be at the rate it is spreading. Since its introduction in York County, Pennsylvania in the 1930s, it has radiated into several surrounding states and is now commonly found in Northern Virginia.

The vine is unmistakable. Its sharp thorns will easily tear the skin of bare arms and legs. Its leaves, alternate on the stem, are perfect triangles. And along the stems are little button-shaped disks called ocreas. Within these ocreas will grow small white flowers, hardly noticeable. But from late summer until the first frost, the glossy, blue fruits are visible.

Birds, chipmunks, squirrels, and deer eat the fruit. And ants likely eat the eliasome on the tips of the seeds. So, while mile-a-minute is an annual, which dies off after a frost, creatures spread it around. So does water. The fruits can float for 7 to 9 days and thus are carried long distances throughout watersheds.

If mile-a-minute provides food for some birds and other creatures, what harm does it do? Like other invasive (See p. 5)



Mile-a-minute smothering milkweed

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE:

The Chapter board would like to welcome our newest member, Vivian Dukes, who will be serving as treasurer. We bid fond farewells and send our heartfelt thanks to Bill Kreitz, our treasurer for four years, and Sally Sieracki, our newsletter editor for four years. In these over-committed times, we are most grateful to the board members and others who give their time and expertise to keep our chapter rolling.

Lastly, I look forward to seeing all of you at our November program. The Virginia Natural Heritage agency has been a long-time partner and supporter of VNPS. Let's support its effort to publish a Virginia flora and enjoy an evening of the best of natural Virginia.

Marianne Mooney

VIRGINIA'S WONDROUS PLANTLIFE

by Marianne Mooney

Virginia is the clematis capital of the U.S., unofficially that is, with more clematis species than any other state. The globally rare smooth coneflower, *Echinacea laevigata*, is found in more sites in Virginia than the entire world. With over 600 rare plants alone, we are the thirteenth state in the number of plant taxa, owing to our fantastic ecological diversity. From shale barrens to balds to wetlands, the biological wealth of our state is vast. But who's keeping track of it?

On November 8 the Potowmack Chapter got that answer and more in a great presentation by Chris Ludwig, chief biologist of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage. The DNH maintains the Commonwealth's biodiversity through protection of natural resources. Chris works in the Inventory section of DNH, which conducts inventories of plants, animals, geologic features and significant natural communities. The data collected guide strategies for protection and management of Virginia's natural areas. Conservation priorities are set and imperiled sites identified and in some cases, become part of the DNH Preserve system. Currently there are thirty-three Natural Area Preserves, encompassing over 20,000 acres in Virginia. Each natural area preserve is managed primarily for the benefit of the rare plant natural communities found there.

For more information about Natural Area Preserves visit:

<http://www.dcr.state.va.us/dnh/preserv.htm>. Fact sheets, photos, and information on visitation are available for 32 of the 33 Natural Area Preserves at this website. Some have wonderfully descriptive names like: Cowbane Wet Prairie, Folly Mills Fen, and Big Spring Bog.

DNH also publishes information about invasive species, a joint project with VNPS. And their newest endeavor is the Flora of Virginia project. The Flora will be a great tool for preserving Virginia's plant diversity through a complete knowledge of our flora. Please support the DNH and their work by letting your representatives in the Virginia legislature know that conservation is important to Virginians.

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Vice President	John C. Magee	478-9428
Secretary	Liz Nalle	698-7606
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<p>(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.</p>		

MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD by Mary Ann Lawler

With the election of a new Governor the coming year will be an important one for the Virginia General Assembly. The Virginia constitution requires that the legislature meet for 60 days in even-numbered years to pass a two-year appropriations bill. Last year the former governor and the legislature could not agree on budget priorities. With slower economic growth, the challenges will be even greater this year.

What can you do to influence the budget and legislative priorities of Virginia? As a non-profit organization classified as 501(c)(3) for tax purposes, the Virginia Native Plant Society has some lobbying restrictions. While it can take positions on budget and other legislative proposals, it cannot expend a substantial portion of its funds to influence legislation. However, individual members of VNPS can express their views however they chose.

To have an impact, it is important to understand the process, the players, the issues, and timing. The process begins with the Governor, whose first task will be to submit a budget and legislative proposals to the Virginia General Assembly. The General Assembly will meet beginning on **January 9**.

In the House, the Subcommittee on Natural Resources will review the natural heritage programs budgets and develop an appropriations bill for them. Once that bill passes the House, it goes to the Senate Finance Committee for action. A conference of the House and Senate committees settles any differences between the two. Those who follow the budget process know that budgets are not boring; they are the best measure of political priorities. Proposals for new laws or changes in law follow the same procedures through standing committees.

The players in this process are very important, particularly the committee chairs, who control the action and most of the content on the bills. The chart on page 4 displays the members of the House and Senate Subcommittees, which have jurisdiction over the budgets for natural resources issues.

You can find all of this information on the official website for the Virginia Assembly:

<http://legis.state.va.us/>

It provides up-to-date notices on the status of legislation. You can also find out who your Delegates and Senators are, by clicking on the “**Who’s My Legislator?**” icon at the top of the page and entering your address and zip code. The site contains postal addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers for the members of the General Assembly. You can also keep up with the status of current legislation.

The best way to connect with your representatives is in a face-to-face meeting. But, letters and even e-mails are very effective. The old squeaky wheel maxim works with the political machinery as well. Your communication really can make a difference.

Delegate Jim Dillard, who represents a portion of Fairfax County and who is Chair of the Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee, once stated that he gets very few letters from constituents during the year, but pays attention to those that he does get. He is also happy to receive e-mails. They’re quick, easy, and don’t tie up as much staff time.

In your communication remember a few basic rules:

1. If you are a constituent, you are more likely to be listened to.
2. Be specific about what you want.
3. Do your homework; get the facts.
4. Know the opposition and be able to discuss its points of view.
5. Be brief.
6. If you’re visiting, leave a piece of paper with your issues written down.

Regional budget hearings are **January 3**. The closest one to us is Northern Virginia-George Mason University, Fairfax Campus, Johnson Center (Multi-Purpose Room) at 12 noon. Speakers will be heard in the order in which they sign up, with a maximum of three minutes per speaker. Lobby day for the Virginia Conservation Network in Richmond is **January 21**. Go to www.vcnva.org to register.

Resolve this year to make a difference by speaking up about native plants, the problem of invasives, and the importance of land acquisition for natural resource preservation.

VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Note: The following list is from the 2001 session. It will be updated when the General Assembly meets and elects new leadership. In mid-January go online to <http://legis.state.va.us/>.

House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Natural Resources	Senate Finance Committee, Subcommittee on Economic Development and Natural Resources
Jim Dillard, Chairman, Fairfax County (portion) Preston Bryant, Lynchburg Kirk Cox, Colonial Heights Tom Jackson, Hillsville Harvey Morgan, Gloucester Tom Moss, Norfolk Ken Plum, Reston	Walter A. Stosch, Chairman, Glen Allen Madison E. Marye, Shawsville Charles R. Hawkins, Chatham Richard L. Saslaw, Springfield Malford Trumbo, Fincastle Frederick Quayle, Chesapeake

For up-to-date information on conservation issues in Virginia, visit the Virginia Conservation Network website: <http://www.vcnva.org/>. There you will find white papers with information on various issues facing the Virginia General Assembly and the Governor and ultimately you, the voter. Conservation issues with “white papers” include the budget, land conservation, land use, forest loss, smart growth, water quality, air quality, and solid waste. The following is excerpted from the VCN white paper on Natural Resources Bond Legislation:

Virginia Conservation Network White Paper Excerpt
Natural Resources Bond Legislation

Of every dollar appropriated in the 2000-2002 state budget, barely a penny (less than one percent) goes to natural resources. Recent budget constraints have hit natural resources priorities disproportionately, compared to other agencies. All of the \$6.2 million appropriated for open space preservation in the second year of the biennium has disappeared. This situation is unlikely to improve in the short term, as state budget analysts say that the General Assembly will have to address an enormous revenue shortfall during the 2002 Session.

Despite the darkening budget picture, Virginia is obligated to meet important goals under the *Chesapeake 2000 Agreement*. Borrowing money through a general obligation bond is one way that the state can provide the funds necessary to pursue these goals. Such bond legislation requires not only approval of the legislature, but also approval of the voters in a statewide referendum.

The last time Virginia passed natural resources bond legislation was in 1992, when voters overwhelmingly approved a \$95 million bond issue for parks and nature preserves. To attempt to meet the critical environmental needs that now face the Commonwealth, the Commission on the Future of Virginia’s Environment has proposed a \$ 459 million bond bill that includes the following components:

\$152 million to acquire land for new state nature preserves and parks and to make improvements in existing state parks. Stewardship of Virginia’s rich biodiversity is entrusted to the state Natural Heritage Program. In 1994, this program was recognized by The Nature Conservancy as the outstanding natural heritage program in the western hemisphere. The program currently manages 33 natural area preserves, but much more remains to be done if the habitats of Virginia’s rare, threatened, and endangered species and significant natural communities and geologic sites are to be protected. Many legislators have also recognized the need to increase financial support for state parks. Virginia currently ranks dead last among the 50 states in per capita spending on state parks. Despite this lack of funding, the National Sporting Goods Association’s Sports Foundation, Inc. has recognized Virginia as having the most well-managed park system in America by awarding the state its 2001 gold medal award.

\$170 million for the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation and \$30 million for farmland protection. Virginia is losing its open space, historic sites, and forests and farms at an alarming rate. The Commonwealth lost nearly a half-million acres of prime farmland from 1987 to 1997, and 54,000 acres of forestland annually between 1992 and 2000. According to a recent study by the Trust for Public Land and the Chesapeake Bay Commission, over the next 25 years, sprawl is predicted to engulf an amount of land equal to the open space developed since Colonial times. The Virginia Land Conservation Foundation provides grants to state agencies, localities, and nonprofit organizations for protection of open spaces and parks, farm and forest lands, natural areas, and historic resources.

MILE-A-MINUTE (Continued from page 1)

plant species, it spreads rapidly and has no natural predators; therefore, it can smother diverse native plant populations that benefit pollinators and birds species, reducing biodiversity.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture conducts research on invasive plants. Kerrie Kyde, a research biologist with the Agricultural Research Service, and current Chairman of the Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council, has been working on mile-a-minute weed. In October she enlisted the help of the Virginia Native Plant Society to collect seeds to learn more about its origins through DNA studies. Potowmack Chapter members, **Marianne Mooney, Mary Ann Lawler, Margaret Chatham and M. Nancy Christmus** collected seeds from several plants at six different locations in northern Virginia, including Shreve Rd. near the W&OD Trail (Fall Church), Fraser Preserve--Nature Conservancy and Calvary Baptist Church property, Nichols Run near Great Falls, Eakin Park in Fairfax County near Prosperity Ave, across the stream from W&OD Trail, north Arlington County near Four Mile Run, and South Four Mile Run in Alexandria and Arlington

Ms. Kyde hopes to collect seed from areas throughout Virginia next year. For on-line information on mile-a-minute weed, visit www.nps.gov/plants/alien.

INVASIVE PLANTS: OPPORTUNITIES TO TAKE ACTION

- Jan. 12 Removal of English ivy at **Lacey Woods Park in Arlington**. The first sessions will be
Feb 10 Saturday, January 12 from 9:30 to noon and Sunday, February 10 from 1 to 4 pm. Interested
 members, feel free to email for more information at norapalm@erols.com. Meet other
 volunteers at the fire ring inside the park.
- Jan. 21 The Northern Virginia Senior Environment Corps will have a group of volunteers at **Dyke
Marsh along the Potomac River** on **Monday, January 21 from 10 to noon**, cutting back
 vines that are threatening to pull down trees and covering every inch of habitat there. The
 group is working with the National Park Service and will happily accept the help of any
 volunteers, senior or otherwise. Bring gloves and clippers. For more information please
 contact Sarah at the Retired Senior Volunteer Program in Alexandria, 703-549-1607, ext.
 342.

MORE DATES TO REMEMBER:

- Jan. 26 Tooltime for Streams: Northern Virginia Stream Confluence
 One day conference at Algonkian Regional Park Sponsored by the Audubon Naturalist
 Society, The Wilderness Society, Clean Water Action, Piedmont Environmental Council.
 Call Stella Kock, 703-669-3922 or email stella@audubonnaturalist.org.
- Feb 10: Introducing Outstanding Ornamental Natives to Your Garden
 Carole Ottesen, Associate Editor of "The American Gardener"
 2-3 PM Green Spring Gardens Park

- ❖ WANT TO JOIN VNPS? Call Linda Haller, Membership Chair, at 703 938-8504, and she will send you an application.
- ❖ WANT TO JOIN THE CHAPTER LISTSERV? Send an e-mail to Sylvia Orli at 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 www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi/vnps-pot.

3rd Annual National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week

February 25-March 1, 2002

Invasive species management has become one of the biggest problems for natural areas nationwide. Each year, the Invasive Weeds Awareness Coalition (IWAC) sponsors National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week (NIWAW) in Washington, D.C. IWAC is composed of private, state, and federal representatives whose main purpose is to raise the awareness noxious and invasive weeds and the problems they are causing on places like National Wildlife Refuges, Parks and Forests, private lands, and elsewhere. The purpose of NIWAW is to raise awareness and educate both the public and Capitol Hill in the fight against noxious and invasive weeds through events, discussions, and visits to congressional offices.

There are many events and activities scheduled for the week this year. Visit the NIWAW web site: <http://www.nawma.org/niwaw.htm> to get meeting and event details as they become available. Although additional activities are still being planned, the week's activities currently include:

- o A Monday (February 25th) morning policy breakfast to brief participants on key national invasive weed issues and the week's activities.
- o Meetings (Tuesday 26th) with Federal agencies active in invasive weed management and control
- o A poster session for Federal policy makers showcasing invasive weed problems and innovative management strategies from the country's top practitioners and researchers.
- o Social events for participants to meet their counterparts from around the country and strengthen relationships with those who share common objectives on invasive weed management
- o A Congressional reception announcing grant recipients from the "Pulling Together Initiative"
- o A Congressional briefing or hearing on a top invasive weeds issue
- o A concluding meeting for NIWAW III participants

Chapter Events
Calendar

Jan	10	Board Meeting 6:45 PM Program 7:30 PM Green Spring Park
Feb	14	Board Meeting 6:45 PM Program 7:30 PM Green Spring Park



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

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