

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 21, No 1

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Jan/Feb 2003

DIVERSE NATURAL COMMUNITIES OF THE FALL LINE REGION (JANUARY 9)

On Thursday, **January 9, at 7:30 p.m. at Green Spring Gardens Park**, Rod Simmons will present a program on "Diverse Natural Communities of the Fall Line Region." The Potowmack Chapter includes Fairfax County, Falls Church, Arlington, and Alexandria, which sit along the Fall Line—partly in the piedmont and partly in the coastal plain—making our area rich with native plant species.

Rod is a field ecologist, who has extensively surveyed the flora and natural communities of Virginia and Maryland especially the inner coast plain and piedmont with an emphasis on geological conditions and plant associations.

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.

NATIVE PLANTS IN THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM'S FERN VALLEY (FEBRUARY 13)

Joan Feely of the National Arboretum will give a slide presentation **February 13 at 7:30 p.m. at Green Spring Gardens Park**. The program is a tour of Fern Valley through the year. From ephemeral spring woodland wildflowers to dazzling, drought-resistant prairie plants, the flora found in a broad slice of the eastern United States is represented in the Fern Valley Native Plant Collection. Many of the plants in the collection are native to the Washington, DC area; in addition, prairie plants seen on the western edge of our eastern forests; plants of the sandy, flat Coastal Plain in the southeastern United States; and trees, shrubs, and woodland flowers of New England are also part of the collection.

Joan Feely is the Curator of the Fern Valley Native Plant Collection at the U.S. National Arboretum, a branch of the Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service. She has been with the Arboretum since 1986, and is responsible for the seven-acre Fern Valley Native Plant Collection, the National Grove of State Trees, and a forest restoration project adjacent to the Arboretum's Beech Woods.

Directions to Green Spring Gardens Park: (See above).

THE THREAT TO BIODIVERSITY FROM INVASIVE ALIEN PLANTS (MARCH 13)

Gain a better understanding of how invasive alien plants affect biodiversity in a program presented by Dr. Faith Campbell of the American Lands Alliance on **March 13 at 7:30 p.m. at Green Spring Gardens Park**.

Dr. Campbell was a founding member of the Virginia Native Plant Society and has been on the State board several times over the past 20 years. She has worked on invasive species problems since the late 1980s, with a considerable focus on invasive plants. She was on advisory committees for the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment report and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. She is currently serving her second term on the Invasive Species Advisory Committee established by President Clinton's Executive Order 13112.

Directions to Green Spring Gardens Park: (See above).



*Invasive porcelain berry vine
Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*

A footer area containing a series of small, stylized icons and symbols arranged in two rows. The symbols include various geometric shapes, numbers, and abstract designs, likely representing a decorative or branding element.

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE:

We are honored to have in our newsletter this month an article by Dr. Stanwyn Shetler, botanist emeritus of the Smithsonian's Natural History Museum. With 20 years behind VNPS, it's a good time to reassess our goals and Dr. Shetler's article provides much food for thought. I agree with Dr. Shetler that we need to focus on conservation before more of our native flora is lost. That we are a conservation organization should be our driving goal, not gardening or plant sales or plant rescues. Dr. Shetler's refrain is to "save habitat" and to do so we need to be aware of what to save, what we're losing. In the New Year, I encourage you all to come to our programs and learn about threats to our native vegetation. Visit area parks to sharpen appreciation for the splendor of our flora. And speak out at budget hearings and the like for protection of our remaining, threatened native plants. Marianne Mooney

VNPS INTERNSHIP 2002 – A WORD OF THANKS by Deborah Waugh

This spring and summer I had the opportunity to complete the internship provided by the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant at Green Spring Gardens Park. I worked in the Virginia Native Plant Garden under the expert tutelage of horticulturalist Brenda Skarphol, who shared with me some of her remarkable knowledge of our native flora.

It was my formal introduction to the world of native plants and has added an invaluable dimension to my continuing horticultural education and endeavors. I learned much about the importance and stewardship of native plants and, by extension, the importance of the work of the Virginia Native Plant Society.

Weeding out the invasives proved grueling work on those stifling hot days of last summer. However, even the code red days were easier to endure in the dappled shade of the native plant garden! Though my internship ended just as fall was beginning, I was able to help research and prepare an information sheet for fall visitors to the garden: "September and October in the Virginia Native Plant Garden: Bloom, Fruit, and Fall Color of Foliage." As spring turned into summer and summer gave way to fall, I had the chance to observe a native landscape filled with year-round contrasts in form and texture, color and interest.

I now work in the children's education program at Green Spring and still spend time "hiking the native plant trail", introducing first-graders to the beauty and diversity of our native species. As a newly qualified Virginia master gardener, I also plan to help educate local gardeners on the virtues of incorporating native plantings into their home landscapes.

As I move forward as both continuing student and educator, I am grateful to have had this opportunity to learn about native plants. I would like to extend my thanks to the Virginia Native Plant Society for funding this important internship.

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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.

ACCOTINK STREAM VALLEY

Protecting the Accotink Stream Valley from Capital beltway widening is a high priority of the Potowmack Chapter. It's hard to believe such pristine woodland exists so close to the beltway. The diversity of native trees, shrubs and forbs is wonderful. Liverwort and fern cover the embankments of the stream. And remarkably, there are few invasive exotic plants.

In early November Registry Chair, Rod Simmons, led a large group of native plant enthusiasts along the Accotink stream valley. Accotink Creek is one of the largest and most picturesque streams in Fairfax County. The County has protected much of it in Mill Creek Park.

There are good stands of mature oak-hickory forest, numerous fern seeps, and a diversity of herbaceous species. We saw a variety of oaks including Southern and Northern red oak, black oak, white oak and Shumard oak and learned to distinguish among them. We also saw large colonies of heaths, including mountain laurel, pinxterflower, and black highbush blueberry. Now that Fairfax County has grown to one million residents, let's resolve not to lose a single acre of its public natural treasures.



RESIDENTS LEARN TO IDENTIFY AND REMOVE INVASIVE PLANTS by Lorne Peterson

A workshop on invasive and native plants held October 26 at the Gulf Branch Nature Center was well attended. Some twenty residents from neighborhoods around Gulf Branch Park came to learn to identify exotic invasive plants and to find out how to restore native species of wildflowers, shrubs, and trees.

Jan Ferrigan, the Invasive Plants Coordinator for Arlington County, gave an engaging presentation on identifying invasive plants. She also showed slides of the ways exotic invasives, such as English Ivy and Kudzu, can cover the ground in a forest and vine up trees, eventually enveloping and killing them. Jan noted that both Gulf Branch and Long Branch nature parks have been designated by Arlington County for invasive plant removal programs.

In a second presentation at the workshop, this writer, a resident of Gulf Branch, gave a talk and slide show on a voluntary project to remove invasives and restore native plants in a woodland place at Gulf Branch Park. I started this project in April 1999. The work involves pulling and digging out invasives, such as Multiflora rose shrubs and the vines of Porcelain berry, Japanese Honeysuckle and Periwinkle. I then plant native species, including Spring Beauty, Cut-leaved Toothwort and Wild Geranium.

The residents who participated in the workshop asked many question about removing invasives and restoring native plants. The director of Gulf Branch Park, Denise Chauvette, said the workshop was a success. She is planning another workshop for next spring, with Jan Ferrigan and myself as presenters. Ms. Chauvette was also pleased with the October 26 community day in Gulf Branch for removing English ivy in the park. She and members of the Gulf Branch Civic Association participated in this community effort. We cleared an area in the park forest of about 50 x 60 feet, and filled about 25 extra-large trash bags with ivy. Participants also dug up and pulled Wisteria shrubs, another invasive that vines up trees.

Seeing the large area of the forest floor free of English ivy gave everyone a good feeling. The Civic Association is considering making this community day for removing invasive plants an annual event. *(Lorne Peterson is a resident of Gulf Branch, Arlington. For information on invasive and native plants, call the Gulf Branch Nature Center at 703-228-4401)*

ROLE OF NATIVE PLANT SOCIETIES IN GRASSROOTS CONSERVATION

by Stanwyn G. Shetler

In 1900, as the Audubon movement to save our native birds was getting underway, the New England Wild Flower Society (NEWFS) was born out of concern for our native plants. While haters were killing birds for their plumes, florists were robbing nature for their flowers. The Audubon movement caught on nationally much more quickly than the native plant movement, which did not really catch on until the second half of the 20th century, especially in the last 25-35 years, when many of the state societies were founded, such as the Virginia Native Plant Society (1982).

Across North America today there are numerous native plant societies under one name or another, including statewide societies in all but a few states. Perhaps the first of the state societies was the North Carolina Wild Flower Preservation Society, founded in 1951. The largest state society is the California Native Plant Society, founded in 1965, which in 2002 has over 10,000 members, 32 chapters, a budget of \$800,000, and 14 full- or part-time employees. The state societies vary greatly in size, budget, and staffing, but most are much smaller, with less than a thousand members, a budget of \$50,000 or less, and typically all-volunteer staffing.

Nothing is more central to their existence than the conservation of the native flora. The rampant development across North America during the last 40 years or so, which has destroyed or fragmented habitat on an alarming scale, has sparked unprecedented citizen concern for the native flora. In effect, the mission of every native plant society is the time-honored mission of the NEWFS: "to promote the conservation of temperate North American plants through education, research, horticulture, habitat preservation, and advocacy."

Few issues have energized the native plant societies in recent years as much as the growing scourge of invasive alien plants in the natural landscape. Thanks to dedicated members, the

state organizations and their local chapters have often led the way in providing public information and guiding local eradication campaigns. Important as this focus is, it must be kept in balance and not become the tail that wags the native-plant-society dog.

Rescues of plants from doomed habitats have been a common activity. Gardening interests have also strongly influenced society agendas, particularly in encouraging the use of native species in landscaping and ecological restorations. Conservation education takes many forms, from field trips and tours to conferences, workshops, classes, school programs, publications, and Web sites. Some societies, as VNPS, are supporting state flora projects or other basic research.

In short, it would be hard to overestimate the importance so far of the native plant societies in the growing movement to save the native flora. At the same time there are some reasons for concern about the future.

I see native plant societies at a crossroad. Will growing natives become the obsession? Will our societies be remembered for saving wild habitat or for adding to the planted landscape? The business of our societies should be to save wild places, not to add to or promote planted landscapes *beyond* obvious gardens. Civilization is busily turning natural landscape into planted landscape at an ever faster pace, and native plant societies should be trying to slow down that process, not fuel it. Are we contributing to the clamor for planted landscapes? As the line between *the natural* and *the artificial* (planted) is being blurred on every hand, the North American landscape in general is being homogenized and our *natural* landscape thoroughly compromised. Planting native can be a cop-out for developers; who can develop wild land and then claim that they are mitigating the damage, perhaps even enhancing the environment, by landscaping with native species. (Continued on next page)

The plant-native trend has spawned a growing market for native species and a whole industry to supply them. The larger the industry, the greater the likelihood of unscrupulous suppliers who will sell wild-collected plants. By pushing the use of native plants, we help to put a price on the heads of native species. Through their own conferences and plant sales, native plant societies help to stimulate and supply the native plant market. Shouldn't native plant societies be strong advocates of natural process in the revegetation of land, minimizing intervention and letting nature be nature whenever possible?

Then there is the question, What is a "native"? A plant from the same continent? Region? State? Part of a state? County? Site? Obviously a species can be native on one level and not on another. If a species is said to be native to an area, does that mean that all individuals of that species are automatically native there also?

Typically, we think of a species as native if it was here in pre-Columbian times, and I would add that an individual of that species must have reached its present-day site by the natural forces of dispersal and colonization without deliberate human intervention. I would go further and say that a native, regardless of source, near or far, becomes an alien or exotic the moment it is sowed or transplanted by human agency. Deliberate introduction, by definition, makes aliens of otherwise native plants. It is not the distance from the source that determines what is alien, but the act of planting. Thus, **a native plants itself, an alien is planted by someone.**

The plant geographer, in plotting and explaining plant distributions, must be able to

rely on the authenticity of the individual records. Everything we know about the nativeness of plants derives ultimately from the geographer's records. The very act of transplanting or sowing falsifies in some measure, large or small, the history of plant migration and establishment and thus falsifies the concepts of "native" and "alien."

From green concrete, fake turf, and plastic greenery and flowers to whole theme parks, ours is an age of fabricated landscapes of little redeeming value as synthetic surrogates for nature. Even our graves are decorated with plastic bouquets, certainly the ultimate cynicism in perpetual care. As a society, we have come to accept counterfeit biomes as the real thing. Surely, native plant societies should spend more time studying nature and less time planting and manipulating it. There are only three rules for saving species—save habitat, save habitat, save habitat! That reality alone should govern our future agenda.



Accotink Creek

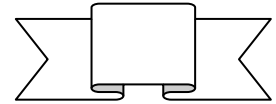
- ❖ **WANT TO JOIN VNPS? Go to www.VNPS.org and print out a membership form. Or call Sylvia Orli, Membership Chair, at 703 528-5618, and she will send you an application.**
- ❖ **WANT TO JOIN THE CHAPTER LISTSERV? Send an e-mail to Sylvia Orli at stone.sylvia@nrmh.si.edu and in the message section write subscribe to vnps-pot, your e-mail address, and your full name. Or visit www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi/vnps-pot.**

Congratulations to the 2002 Special Award Recipients!

Steve Campbell – the 2002 Conservation Award

Margaret Chatham - for 500 hours of volunteer work in the propagation beds

Dusty Dukes - for 100 hours of volunteer work in the propagation beds



WILDLIFE VALUE AND NATIVE PLANTS by Mary Ann Lawler (with liberal quotes from the Native Plants East listserve.)

Sometimes our own keen observations are better at judging the value of our native flora for wildlife than the reference tools we often depend on. A recent e-mail discussion about the “wildlife” value of Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) trees provides some interesting insights. One book, “Native Trees, Shrubs, and Vines for Urban and Rural America: A Planting Design Manual for Environmental Designers” had said sweetgum had low wildlife value, yet another book by the Audubon Society had said the tree attracted numerous species of birds. If birds are not wildlife, what is?

The examples of wildlife benefits of sweetgums came pouring in. Sam Jones said: “What is surely one of our most spectacular moths, the Luna Moth, uses Sweet Gum as larval host plant.” One person at the National Wildlife Visitor Center in Laurel, MD, reported goldfinches, high atop their sweetgums, “pecking at the seed balls.” Craig Tufts added pine siskin, juncos, sparrows and house finches to the list. Others pointed out that in addition to birds, beaver, squirrels and chipmunks use the tree.

Apparently some texts consider a plant’s benefits to game species, like deer or turkey, the most important wildlife value. Non-game species and insects are not considered. Our own VNPS brochures “Native Plants for Conservation, Restoration, and Landscaping” are misleading about wildlife value. The *Liquidambar styraciflua* has no checkmark indicating that it is useful to wildlife. Nor does the Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) have a checkmark for wildlife use. But as Paul Bedell points out: “Redbud serves as the larval host for Henry's Elfin, and different references make very subjective opinions on what is ‘wildlife’ and what has ‘wildlife value.’” Paul rightfully states: “any native plant likely has a host of ecological relationships.”

Master gardener and naturalist Louisa Thompson asserts: “all native plants have wildlife value - how could they not? But the wildlife they support most directly may consist of insects or other inconspicuous creatures. For example, redbud is not listed as having wildlife value, because it doesn't produce fruit. Most lists of trees and shrubs for wildlife emphasize fruits and nuts eaten by birds and mammals. While many birds do eat fruit in fall and winter, and some do in summer, 98% of North American birds eat insects for at least part of the year. There's a *Rhabdopterus* beetle, for instance, that scallops the leaf edges of my redbuds each year, and does not feed on other trees. Witch hazel is pollinated by a noctuid moth and is its sole food source, for nothing else blooms in November. But not all of these relationships have been discovered or reported yet. All trees provide nest sites, and many have symbiotic relationships with mycorrhizal fungi. It's a vastly complex food web out there.”

And Karyn Molines of the Maryland Native Plant Society tells us: “Understanding the role of each native plant is vital—showy flowers and big juicy fruits are important, but the not-so-impressive plants may be even more critical in the bigger picture--and will provide the basis for enabling all native species (plants and animals) to thrive. Especially important is the role of invertebrates that, as Louisa points out, “provide important protein for larger animal species and play a role in pollination, natural pest control, soil rejuvenation, and who knows what other roles.”

ARLINGTON COUNTY PROPOSES LISTING ENGLISH IVY AS NOXIOUS WEED

The Arlington County Board voted to include in its 2003 legislative package a proposal that the Virginia General Assembly enact a law listing English ivy as a noxious weed throughout Virginia. The following is the language of the proposal:

“Declare English Ivy a Noxious Weed. The National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report that English Ivy is one of the most abundant and insidious invasive plants, as it threatens all vegetation levels of forested and open areas, growing along the ground and into the tree canopy. On the ground, English Ivy prevents growth of seedlings and herbs while also reducing tree and plant vigor by competing for water and soil nutrients. English Ivy affects trees by blocking sunlight and adding weight to branches, which makes trees more susceptible to breakage during storms. English Ivy has also been confirmed as a reservoir for bacterial leaf scorch, a harmful plant pathogen that affects a wide variety of native and ornamental trees such as elms, oaks, and maples. Reports in Arlington indicate that English Ivy appears to increase the susceptibility of trees to fungal disease and bark damage by holding moisture next to the bark of trees.

“Proposal: Listing English Ivy as a noxious weed in Virginia could result in a quarantine and regulations governing the sale and transport of English Ivy that will provide Arlington long term savings in costs associated with tree loss/replacement and loss/replacement of native plants. Arlington County supports legislation that declares English Ivy a noxious plant and provides the Board and the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, respectively, the authority to regulate English Ivy as a noxious weed.”

Kudos to VNPS members Scott Knudsen, Paul Kovenock,, Lorne Peterson, and Steve Young who testified before the County Board on the proposal!

ARLINGTON’S RiP PROGRAM: MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!

Below is a list of invasive plant-related meetings and events scheduled for early 2003. The January 15th meeting is especially important. If you have volunteered to remove invasive plants in a local park, please make sure a representative from your area is present at the January 15 meeting so we can continue to build on your efforts. Feel free to invite others.

Wed Jan 15 - Invasive Plant Pull Together Volunteer Meeting -

Volunteers and County Parks staff are 'pulling together' to help remove invasive plants from 18 sites in Arlington. Representatives from all areas where volunteers have helped remove invasive plants from County property will meet to receive an update on work done in 2002 and learn how volunteers can help lead efforts and monitor progress of control sites. 7-9 pm, Rm. 10, Fairlington Community Center, 3308 S. Stafford St. Arlington, 22206

Sat Jan 18 – Invasive plant removal 10 am to 1 pm at Lubber Run Park, N Columbus St at N 2nd St. Dress in warm layers. Some tools will be provided. If you have your own gloves, clippers, loppers or dull flat screwdrivers, please bring them along. Meet at Amphitheater parking lot. Contact Paul Kovenock 703 525 5221 for more info.

Tues Jan 28 - English Ivy - Control Techniques and Alternatives for Home Owners -

7-9 pm, Long Branch Nature Center * Registration required, please call 703 228 7636 to register.

Wed Feb 12 - Common Invasive Plant ID -Learn to identify Arlington's most common and troublesome invasive plants. 7-9 pm, Rm. 10, Fairlington Community Center 3308 S. Stafford St. Arlington

Tues Feb 25th - Common Native Plant ID -

Learn identification tips and interesting facts about Arlington's common native plant species. 7-9 pm, Gulf Branch Nature Center, *Registration required, please call 703 228 3403 to register.

Wed Mar 12th - Ideas for Volunteer Recruitment - (How to Get People to Help Out in Your Area)

7-9 pm, Rm. 10, Fairlington Community Center

Tues Mar 25th - Mapping as a Tool -

Learn how mapping can be used for planning and monitoring invasive plant control efforts. 7-9 pm, Rm. 10, Fairlington Community Center

For information about any of these events, please contact Jan Ferrigan, Invasive Species Program Coordinator at 703 228 7636 or jferriga@vt.edu

Marianne Mooney, President, Potowmack Chapter of VNPS

I want to express appreciation on behalf of your fellow members of the VNPS Board of Directors for the extraordinary financial support by our Potowmack Chapter members this year. It was through the generosity of your board of directors that your two gifts totaled \$2,000 by the end of 2002. It was unexpected help that was very timely and therefore, received gratefully. As VNPS grows and increases services to members, we will surely remember the help Potowmack Chapter extended to the society through the leaner days.

We also extend congratulations upon the completion of the 20th anniversary of the Potowmack Chapter. You have done well. May 2003 be a year that reveals our work has been effective to protect native plants and their habitats.

Again, "Thank you!"

Nicky Staunton, VNPS President

OTHER DATES TO KEEP IN MIND:

Jan 13–Mar 31: Introduction to Ecology, Gary Evans, USDA Graduate School; Capital Gallery. Mon 6 – 8 pm Classes plus two field trips: \$229 Call 202-314-3320 or register on line at www.grad.usda.gov

Jan 15–Mar 19: Winter Woody Plant Identification, Cris Fleming, Woodend Nature Center, Bethesda. 10 classes and three field trips \$229. Call 202-314-3320 or register on line at www.grad.usda.gov

Jan 20—Dyke Marsh invasives removal and cleanup 10am to noon, meet at the Haul Road entrance, Call Lindsey Schuh 703-549-1607 for information.

Feb 6: Winter Botany, Stan Shetler, Rust Sanctuary 7-9pm (Field Trip, Feb 8 9:30am to 3:30pm) Audubon Naturalist Society; \$34 for non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

Feb 19 – April 16: Botany, Marian Lobstein, Wednesdays 7 – 9 pm; 2 field trips; Fairfax High School, Fairfax Audubon Society; \$175 for non-members Call 703-256-6895 for information.

Feb 24–28: NATIONAL INVASIVE WEED AWARENESS WEEK, Washington, D.C.

Feb 23: Insects and Gardeners: Time for a Truce, Eric Grissell, Research Entomologist for USDA Green Spring Gardens Park Sun. 2-3 pm \$7 Call for reservations 703-642-5173

Mar 8: Winter Tree Identification, Cris Fleming 9am to 2pm Audubon Naturalist Society, Woodend Sanctuary, Chevy Chase; \$28 for non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

Mar 8: Dyke Marsh invasives removal, 10am to noon Call Lindsey Schuh 703-549-1607 for information

Mar 15: Creating a Backward Habitat, Carol Hadlock 9am to noon; Fairfax High School, Fairfax Audubon Society; \$35 for non-members Call 703-256-6895 for information.



Chapter Events Calendar

Jan	9	Board meeting 6:45pm Program on Fall line communities 7:30 Green Spring
Feb	13	Board meeting 6:45pm Program on Fern Valley natives 7:30 Green Spring
Mar	13	Board meeting 6:45pm Invasives and Biodiversity 7:30 Green Spring

**Potowmack Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 5311
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