

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 21, No 6

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Nov/Dec 2003

MAGNOLIA BOGS: GEMS OF THE FALL LINE (POTOWMACK CHAPTER ANNUAL MEETING AND WALK) – OCTOBER 23 & 25

Jim Long will give a presentation on Magnolia Bogs – Gems of the Fall Line at the annual meeting of the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society on Thursday, October 23, at 7:30 pm at Green Spring Gardens Park, following a brief Chapter business meeting to vote on new officers. We want to emphasize the importance of protecting those magnolia bogs remaining in our area.

Jim is a member of the Maryland Native Plant Society, a frequent lecturer on wetlands issues, coordinator of Friends of Mattawoman Creek, and a government physical scientist.

Directions to Green Spring Gardens Park: From the beltway, exit at 52B (Little River Turnpike East) and go 3.5 miles. Turn left on Braddock Road. Go 2/10 of a mile and turn right to entrance on Witchhazel Road.

Rod Simmons, our Registry Chair and noted field ecologist, will lead a walk at the magnolia bog in Franconia/Springfield, VA, on Saturday, October 25 from 10am - 1pm.

Directions to bog area: From 395/95 take the Franconia Road exit (Route 644) east; proceed about one mile. After you pass Key Middle School on the left, turn right on Seatrend Way; park immediately, right inside the development entrance, where we will gather to proceed to the bog. Call Mary Ann Lawler 703-684-8622, if you have questions.

FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN: A STUDY OF TURKEYBEARD, A RARE, FIRE-ADAPTED TEMPERATE FOREST HERB– NOVEMBER 13, 7:30 PM

Norm Bourg, ecology research fellow at the Smithsonian's National Zoo's Conservation & Research Center, will present his research on the population biology and distribution of turkeybeard on November 13 at 7:30 PM at Green Spring Gardens Park in Annandale, Virginia. Turkeybeard (*Xerophyllum asphodeloides*) is a very rare lily, which surprised naturalists two years ago with its profusion of blooms in the Shenandoah National Park and George Washington National Forest. None of the current park or forest service employees had ever witnessed such blooms.

Mr. Bourg is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Biology at the University of Maryland, College Park, and has had considerable field experience in conservation. He holds B.S. and B.A. degrees in Wildlife Biology and Zoology from the University of Montana and an M.S. in Conservation Biology and Sustainable Development from the University of Maryland. His work has been funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Smithsonian Institution, the University of Maryland, and the U.S. Forest Service.

For information, call Shirley Gay (703-920-1913)

Directions to Green Spring Gardens Park: From the beltway, exit at 52B (Little River Turnpike East) and go 3.5 miles. Turn left on Braddock Road. Go 2/10 of a mile and turn right to entrance on Witchhazel Road.



We must take the problem of invasive exotic species seriously and marshal the necessary resources....It is largely a question of sensitizing the public that invasive species are changing our natural heritage and destroying native plants.

Ecologist Daniel Simberloff, Ph.D., University of Tennessee, from his lecture “One War We Can Win: We are not doomed to be overrun by introduced species”

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE:

The New Year for VNPS begins on November 1. The state board will have a new president and several new board members; the chapter board has some changes as well. We would like to welcome Lee Ann Kinzer, our new secretary. And many thanks go to Liz Nalle for her fine service as secretary and for agreeing to chair publications. Billie Trump departs with our deepest gratitude as Garden Tours chair, a position that requires botanical knowledge mixed with a lot of patience and fortitude. Billie has been on the board for the past five years, not to mention her years of service since joining VNPS in 1983. She’s been a wonderful asset to the Chapter and I know we’ll still see her around the propagation beds occasionally. At our annual meeting we’ll be thanking others who regularly volunteer to help out the chapter, especially our dedicated propagation committee people who raise most of the money for the chapter. Come join us on the 23rd of October to meet some of our valued members and to enjoy a program on the fascinating Magnolia Bogs of our area.

Marianne Mooney

PLANT SALE FOLLOW-UP

The fall sale was a big success for the chapter. Volunteers sold approximately 745 plants. Although the sale took place in our own propagation beds, we sold more plants than we did in September of 2002. Most people knew that we were not located at our regular spot on the lawn. It was a beautiful day and we hope that the public enjoyed shopping where they could observe many of the plants that we “pot-up” for the sale.

There is a growing interest in planting native plants in home gardens. We hope that this interest will also inspire the gardeners to help preserve yet undisturbed natural sites in our region. It is at those sites where we can all share in the incredible diversity of native plants that flourish in our part of the world.

Please note that at the sale we mistakenly sold several "Green Dragons" that were, in fact, an aggressive Asian plant, *Pinellia pedatisecta*, commonly called false Jack-in-the-Pulpit. If you purchased this plant, please call us and we will help you select a true native for your garden. We apologize and will endeavor to check our plants more carefully in the future. Please dispose of the plant you purchased as you see fit. Also, please understand that it will reseed very quickly. If you prefer, you may receive a refund instead.

Thanks for attending the sale and remember, you are always welcome to join us April through October in the propagation beds on Wednesday and Saturday mornings where we maintain the beds, pot-up plants and share information and seedlings.

Laura Beaty (703-534-8746) and Beth Smith (703-644-1760)

MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR NATIVE PLANTS IN ALEXANDRIA

Congratulations to VNPS member Scott Knudsen for his very successful promotion of native plants in his Parkfairfax, Alexandria neighborhood. Scott organized an evening program with a slide presentation by Liz Nalle and then held a native plant sale on October 11. Several vendors offered plants to a steady stream of customers from the community and throughout the area. Beth Smith was on the scene for four hours helping native plant beginners at the VNPS display, and other chapter members advised on native plant selection and care. Scott mobilized lots of volunteers to keep things organized – from members of his condominium’s Landscape and Woodlands Committees, to numerous helpers with ID badges from Tree Stewards, Master Gardeners, as well as VNPS. One individual energizing many others does make a difference! Thank you so much, Scott.

BOARD OFFICERS		
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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.

ALTERNATIVES TO ENGLISH IVY (Thanks to all who contributed to this article!)

What can we recommend to replace English ivy? For many, many years homeowners in Northern Virginia have used *Hedera helix* in areas with landscaping challenges like dense shade or shady slopes. And over time, instead of solving a problem, the ivy has created new problems, as it climbed up and choked trees; it spread to parks and other natural areas, where it destroyed the native vegetation in its path; and it formed perfect hiding places for urban rats. Fortunately, many homeowners are now looking for alternatives to the ivy.

The answer to what best replaces English ivy, as with many such questions, is "It depends." The answer is not simple; it does depend on the location of the lot and goals of the property owners. Do they want to re-create a natural woodland? Are they trying to prevent erosion in one spot? Do they want their entire back yard to be a low maintenance garden with no grass? Do they want the area open or dense? Do they merely want to put in a little groundcover, which can withstand shade under a tree? Here are some ideas.

Groundcovers. For smaller shady areas where a groundcover is desired, several choices of native plants are available:

Evergreen or semi-evergreen for shade:

-Creeping phlox (*Phlox stolonifera*) mats together to make a spectacular display of blue/violet in early spring and stays low and green throughout the rest of the year.

Although it's small, it spreads rapidly to make a carpet.

-Green-and-gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*) is recommended by Carol Shuh, who says "It hugs the ground and is pretty much evergreen around here." It also creates lovely displays of yellow flowers in spring that last into May.

-Allegheny spurge (*Pachysandra procumbens*) is an excellent groundcover for shade.

-Golden ragwort (*Senecio aureus*) is evergreen and forms thick mats. In early spring it will send up tall stalks of yellow flowers, which pollinators love. When the spent flowers begin to look raggedy, either leave the seeds for the goldfinches, or cut them down to the leafy bases, where they cover the ground. Plant these where they have plenty of room to spread.

-Partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*), recommended by Steve Young, is another evergreen, which hugs the ground. Chipmunks, birds, and squirrels eat its berries.

-Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*) has lovely little spikes of white flower in May and the foliage lasts all year long.

Evergreen for semi-shade:

-Robin's plantain (*Erigeron pulchellus*), recommended by Barbara and Laura Farron, is a pale violet composite with a basal rosette. It blooms in spring and is very attractive to insects for its nectar. Laura Beaty says that she walks on hers and does no harm to it.

-Common Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*), is another Farron recommendation.

-Pussytoes (*Antennaria plantaginifolia*) is very low growing and dense with sprigs of pale green "toes."

-Mouse-eared coreopsis (*Coreopsis auriculata*) is recommended by JoAnn Krumvide. Butterflies and bees love it.

-Wild stone crop (*Sedum ternatum*), a succulent, will work with some sun.

-Sedges. Laura Beaty reminds us not to forget sedges, which form attractive clumps and colonize. She recommends Plantain-leaved sedge (*Carex plantaginea*), colonial oak sedge (*Carex communis*), and especially white bear sedge (*Carex albursina*).

Deciduous for shade:

-Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) is a lovely deep green and spreads, but it dies back after the first frost. It needs lots of shade.

-Violets (*Viola canadense* and other species) are not evergreen, but they provide nectar in early spring and are hosts to several butterfly larvae. Ants will spread the seed around. And the violets help hold the soil.

Vines

-Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) was recommended by Gilah Goldsmith and several others. Gilah says that it volunteered in her yard after she successfully eradicated the English ivy. It's taller and less dense, but she says it looks beautiful under the trees. It is aggressive, so be sure to put it in a place that you don't mind it spreading, Virginia creeper will grow up trees without harming them because it is deciduous, and birds love the berries. Its maroon and scarlet hues in fall are spectacular.

-Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*), Carolina jasmine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) and native honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) vines are Beth Smith's recommendations. They are not invasive, and they are all great for pollinators, such as hummingbirds. The red berries of the native honeysuckle feed birds, squirrels, and chipmunks.

Herbaceous plants. The following are plants that spread on their own to cover a shady/semi-shady area where there was once ivy:

-Virginia knotweed (*Tovara virginiana/Persicaria virginiana*) worked out well in Sally Sieracki's wooded backyard--it has completely filled a large space in a couple of years and looks very nice in a "shaggy, woody way" she says. She has both the straight species and the 'Painter's Palette' cultivar. What is special about this knotweed, is that cardinals love the seed.

-White wood aster (*Aster divericatus*) will take over a shady area and provide nectar for pollinators in fall. Cut the spent blooms back and enjoy its semi-evergreen leaves.

-Heart-leaved aster (*Aster cordifolia*) is similar to white wood aster, but with pale blue flowers. **(Cont. on p.4)**

(Continued from previous page)

-Lobelia species (*Lobelia cardinalis*, *Lobelia siphilitica*) have basil rosettes that will spread. They even take sun in areas that stay moist.

-Zigzag goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*) is very attractive to insects in fall.

-Turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*) in both the white and pink form will spread in moister soils, and the hummingbirds and bumblebees love its nectar.

Ferns. For an attractive, taller groundcover, Barbara Farron recommends certain ferns that spread if the area is reasonably moist: hay-scented, New York, sensitive and lady ferns. Christmas fern is an evergreen alternative that will not spread and will grow on slopes.

A natural woodland. If a property has tall trees and is near a wooded natural area, a homeowner may want to consider letting the backyard blend in with the woodland. In that case, after pulling out the ivy one could leave things alone and let nature do the work. Seeds may be lying dormant under that ivy. Marianne Mooney (Potowmack Chapter President) pulled English ivy (*Hedera helix*) recently from around the edges of a demonstration garden in Bon Air Park. She discovered some Solomon's seal (*Polygonum pendatum*) growing up from the middle of the vines. Several feet away under a huge holly, numerous jack-in the pulpit (*Arisaema triloba*) had sprung up where ivy had been pulled out last year. These recoveries reinforces Stan Shetler's view that the best way to restore an area that had been infested with invasives is most often to leave it alone and see what grows back naturally from the seed bank.

Louis Nichols pulled up ivy in his backyard and was rewarded with bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) and dogtooth violet (*Erythronium americanum*). Spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*) and mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*) could show up in our area.

A planted woodland. Paul Kovenok's backyard was featured on the garden tour last year. After removing "tons of matted English ivy," on his shade to part-shade slope with many native trees, he used some of the native groundcovers listed above: green and gold, ginger, phlox, pachysandra and foamflower (which, incidentally are listed in a brochure offered by Behnke's Nursery in Maryland as alternatives to English ivy). Then, he filled his woodland with other natives including several species of ferns, Virginia bluebells, bloodroot, Jacobs ladder, Canada violet, jack-in the pulpit, wood poppy, wild blue phlox, golden ragwort, wild bleeding heart, wild geranium, wild columbine, solomon's seal, may apple, false solomon's seal, black snakeroot, white wood aster, turtlehead, Canada anemone, alumroot, rue anemone, goatsbeard and more.

An alternative to planting many smaller plants is to recreate a woodland understory with small native trees and shrubs. Ideally, those trees and shrubs, which would have occurred naturally in the original ecosystem, would be planted.

Preventing erosion. At the recent Invasive Species conference in Philadelphia, Cole Burrell encouraged the use of many species in concert to prevent erosion. He recommends fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*), whorled milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*), colony-forming native honeysuckle shrubs (*Diervilla spp.*), and red and black chokeberries (*Aronia spp.*). The latter have a wide range of tolerances.

According to the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF), one of the best ways to prevent erosion on a steep slope is to plant trees. The network of roots holds the soil better than anything else. For recommendations on species of trees to plant particularly along a stream, see the plant guide for riparian reforestation, compiled by VDOF: www.vdof.org/rfb/riparian/rwg/genbuff/smallt.pdf.

This list shows light requirements and planting zones from flood plains to upper slopes. It also recommends small tree and shrub species, which may work well where there are overhanging wires. Tree seedlings are available from VDOF and the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District.

On a slope with some sun, other recommendations include sumac (*Rhus spp.*) and coral berry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculata*), which grow fast and spread, interspersed with tree seedlings. River oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) would work in a shadier area.

Where to begin? We recommend that people start out doing a little at a time. They can pull the ivy out from under a couple of trees and connect the trees with an island of leaf mulch no more than two inches thick. Then they should either leave the island alone to see what natives come up, or plant native shrubs or herbaceous native plants in the island.

Over time, by removing the ivy and establishing beds such as these or by letting nature take its course, homeowners could turn their entire backyards into more natural areas with narrow paths made of wood chips. They will marvel at the diversity of birds, butterflies, bees, beneficial insects, rabbits, toads, spiders, shrews, snakes, possums, foxes, and chipmunks as they begin to gather. Compare that view with the bleak landscape of English ivy!

From Jil Swearingen of the Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council: "We recently updated the invasive plant list on the Weeds Gone Wild web page to include the states and national parks where the plants are reported to be invading natural areas. Please feel free to contact me about additional plant species not included or any errors, questionable listings, etc. The direct link is: <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/list/all.htm> ." Jil Swearingen 202-342-1443, x218 <http://weedsgonewild.org>

A SUMMER OF GROWTH: NATIVE PLANT INTERNSHIP

by Lori Baker-Richardson, 2003 Native Plant Intern, Green Spring Gardens Park, Fairfax County

Where to begin? Having spent the last few months as the Virginia Native Plant Garden intern for this year, I have many to thank and much to share from this unique learning experience.

Upon beginning my internship, I had little knowledge of Virginia native plants, just a desire to learn. Fortunately, Brenda Skarphol, and the staff at Green Spring Gardens are very knowledgeable about native plants and were willing to share their considerable expertise with me. At first it was difficult to grasp the multitude of plants and the very different ways certain areas were treated. However, as I learned more, it became much clearer. In addition to learning about various native plants and their habitats, I gained an appreciation for the amount of time, labor, and effort required to maintain a native plant garden and the importance of doing so. Incorporated into the internship was a period of time spent learning to properly maintain plant records and signage, which was also very educational.

Under the guidance of the Green Spring staff and through experience gained working along the Virginia Native Plant Garden, I have gained valuable information on exotic invasive plants, how they encroach and eventually “muscle out” native plants. Since I currently work in plant sales, I am able to pass along this information to other gardeners and suggest native plants or less aggressive plants instead.

I would like to thank the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society, all of its supporters and the staff at Green Spring for making this internship possible. It has given me invaluable information I will use throughout my horticultural career. I hope they will continue to provide this wonderful opportunity to others in the future.

REPORT ON THE INVASIVES PLANT CONFERENCE

Over 300 people from throughout the region participated in the Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council’s Conference on “Invasive Plants: Issues, Impacts & Action,” August 6 and 7 at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Numerous organizations from Federal and state agencies, non-profit organizations, the green industry, and academia helped sponsor the conference, including the Virginia Native Plant Society.

Speakers from throughout the region covered many topics. John Randall of the Nature Conservancy talked about the St. Louis Declaration’s Voluntary Codes of Conduct to address invasive plant issues and the need to involve individual nurseries, landscape architecture firms, garden clubs, botanic gardens, and government agencies. Jocelyn Sladen, President of the Piedmont Chapter of VNPS, participated in a panel discussion, which covered the St. Louis Declaration in practice. All of the panelists agreed that educating the gardening public on the impacts of invasives is critical. Cole Burrell offered many ideas on alternatives to invasive shrubs, trees, and herbaceous plants. And several speakers presented management techniques for controlling Japanese knotweed, lesser celandine, mile-a-minute and Japanese stiltgrass.

Here are just a few noteworthy facts and suggestions that came from the conference:

- ~North Carolina was the first state to adopt a policy on invasive exotic plants, even before the St. Louis Declaration.
- ~Preventing the introduction of new invasive exotic species is more important than controlling the existing ones.
- ~It is important to get the word out to nurseries by writing letters or talking to someone in the organization, using a non-confrontational approach. The “box” type stores sell most plants; they need to get the word about invasives.
- ~Deer help spread invasive plants, because they eat the native broad-leaf shrub and plant species and leave the invasives. The over-abundance of deer is affecting native plant ecosystems in our region.
- ~Non-native earthworms are destroying leaf litter, which is habitat for tiny mites and springtails. These tiny insects are a food source for salamanders. Thus invasive earthworms are causing a major decline in salamander and the collapse of whole systems.
- ~ Dr. Bernd Blossey of Cornell University offers a free diagnostic service to identify whether a particular stand of phragmites is native or not: (See www.invasives.net)
- ~We can help prevent the spread of garlic mustard and other exotic species and disease organisms by cleaning our shoes before and after hikes into natural areas.
- ~Most birds (96 percent) eat insects. Research shows that plant-eating insects are selective and do not eat exotic plants. As exotic plants displace natives, insect populations decline, which in turn affects bird populations.

ARLINGTON'S RiP PROJECT

Sat Nov 1 - Windy Run Park and Glen Carlyn Park Volunteer Work Day Spend a fall morning helping tackle the problem of invasive plants in Arlington. Choose from two locations:

--**Windy Run Park** at 2420 Kenmore St. in North Arlington. Meet at the cul-de-sac at the end of Kenmore St. 10 am-noon
 --**Glen Carlyn Park** at in South Arlington at 625 S Carlin Springs Rd. Meet at the Long Branch Nature Center. 10 am-noon

Sat Nov 1 and Dec 6 Lacey Woods First Saturday Project. 9am to noon. Neighbors and RiP volunteers will meet at Lacey Woods Park on first Saturdays. Come help out for an hour or two. 1200 N George Mason Dr. (corner of George Mason and Washington Blvd). Meet at the playground.

Sat. Nov 8 and Dec 13 Second Saturdays at Bluemont Park 11 to 2 Neighbors and RiP volunteers will continue to meet at Bluemont Junction Park on second Saturdays. Come help out for an hour or two. Park near bike trail at the bottom of Illinois St. Enter Illinois St. from Wilson Blvd. Meet at "the rocks" next to the bike trail. Contact John Huennekens at 524-3853, or jhuenn@gwu.edu,

Note: Some tools provided. If you have your own gloves, clippers, loppers or dull flat screwdrivers, please bring them along to removal events. Long pants and long sleeves recommended. For information about any of these events, please contact Jan Ferrigan, Invasive Species Program Coordinator at (703) 228 7636 or jferriga@vt.edu or Kasey Spriggs at (703) 228 6401

LOCAL EVENTS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:

Oct. 25 Pimmit Run Park Invasives removal 9am to noon. Join volunteers with the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust as they remove bamboo and other invasive plants from the banks of Little Pimmit Run. Participants should wear gloves and bring gardening tools if they have them. Refreshments will be provided. Meet at Little Pimmit Run Park, North 38th Street and North Dumbarton Street, Arlington, VA *DIRECTIONS: From Old Dominion & Lee Highway, take Old Dominion west to North 38th Street and make a right. At North Dumbarton Street make a left. For information call Mike Nardolilli at 703-536-4058*

Nov. 8 Invasive removal/Trash Collection Dyke Marsh, Alexandria, 10am to noon Call Brooke Andrews 703 -549-1607 Ext. 141 for information.

Dec. 13 Invasive removal/Trash Collection Dyke Marsh, Alexandria, 10am to noon Call Brooke Andrews 703 -549-1607 Ext. 141 for information.

Jan 14-Mar 10 Winter Woody Plant Identification (10 classes and 3 field trips). USDA Graduate School; Woodend Sanctuary, Chevy Chase Wednesdays 7 – 9pm. Classes plus 3 field trips: \$295 Instructor, Cristol Fleming. Call 202-314-3320 or register on line at www.grad.usda.gov



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

Chapter Events Calendar

Oct	23	Chapter Annual Meeting & Program 7:30 Green Spring
Oct	25	Magnolia Bog Walk 10am
Nov	13	Turkeybeard Program 7:30 pm Green Spring
Dec	11	Board meeting 7:30 Green Spring

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