

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 22, No 3

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

May/June 2004

MAY 15 NATIVE PLANT SALE AT GREEN SPRING GARDENS PARK

Put May 15 on your calendar for the chapter's first plant sale of the year. After you do that, check your garden for any native plants or seedlings that you would like to share with the chapter. Woody plants, trees and shrubs, are especially important since we don't grow them at our propagation beds. We will be offering a good variety of ferns, scads of *Monarda didyma* for the hummingbirds, plus that hard to find *Pachysandra procumbens*, a great alternative to English ivy. In addition, we have lots of Virginia bluebells available.

It seems our work is never done, potting up all those donations from our generous members. In fact, it won't get done unless we can find some kind volunteers to help us at the beds either Wednesday or Saturday mornings from 9:30 am to noon. Our volunteers are rewarded with many plants to try in their yards. You will learn to identify many native plants which make hikes in the woods much more interesting. Plant donations should be brought to our beds two weeks prior to the sale, May 1. If you need assistance in getting plants here, give us a call and we'll help you. Thanks for your help and please consider helping out in our growing beds whenever you can. We look forward to seeing you at the Green Spring Gardens Day sale. We will once again be located at our propagation beds.

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

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

MAGNOLIA BOG CLEANUP, SAT., MAY 22

Join Registry Chair, Rod Simmons, and other chapter members at 10 am on Saturday, May 22, as they help pick up trash and do some minor invasive removal at Barcroft Park's Magnolia Bog. The VA Department of Conservation and Recreation has classified this plant community as the highest ranking of global and state rarity, and we want to help Arlington County protect it. Wear gloves and protective clothing. We will meet at the bike trail near the corner of South Four Mile Run Drive and Walter Reed Drive to walk into the area, because of the construction at Barcroft Park.

PLUMMERS ISLAND WALK WITH DR. ELIZABETH WELLS, SAT., JUNE 12

Dr. Elizabeth Wells will lead chapter members on a field trip to Plummers Island, Saturday, June 12, from 9am to noon. Plummers Island is a small wooded island in the Potomac downriver from the American Legion Bridge. The Washington Biologists Field club has studied the flora and fauna of the island since 1908, making it the most heavily studied island in North America. For a checklist of the flora of Plummers Island and a history of the Washington Biologists' Field Club by Dr. Stan Shetler and a brief description of its plant communities written by Dr. Wells, see:

<http://persoon.si.edu/dcflora/dcplummers/PlummersIslandPlantCommunities.htm>. Dr. Wells is an associate professor of botany at GW University specializing in native and naturalized plants of Eastern America. She is working on a study of the flood plain and upland communities on Plummer's Island.

Plummers Island is separated from the Maryland shore by a narrow channel lying between Locks 10 and 12 of the C&O Canal. Some scrambling over some rocks will be necessary and the channel is sometimes too deep for access. Therefore, it will require close coordination to confirm the day of the walk. Registration is required; we will give those registered a 24-hour e-mail notice if the channel crossing is too deep, but we will still have a walk on the Maryland shore. The trip will be cancelled only in case of heavy rain. For reservations email Shirley Gay (shirleywg@comcast.net) or call 703-920-1913.

Directions: From the beltway(495) at the American Legion Bridge, take the Clara Barton Parkway heading north towards Carderock. The Carderock exit is one mile from the bridge, clearly marked. Follow signs into park. At the stop sign after the underpass, turn right and then left into the first parking lot. We will meet there at 9 a.m. to carpool to the site.

FERNS AND FERN IDENTIFICATION WITH CRIS FLEMING – June 24, 6:45 P.M.

In the wild and in the garden, ferns are a wonderful part of natural landscapes. They vary widely in form, texture, habit, and habitat. Come learn more about our native ferns on Thursday, June 24, when we will welcome botany chair, Cris Fleming. At 7:00 p.m., Cris will lead a short walk along the Native Plant Trail at Green Spring Gardens Park, where we'll see a large and varied collection of native ferns. Later we'll return to Green Spring's multipurpose room for her slide presentation on our local ferns and fern allies. Brenda Skarpol of Green Spring will also be available to answer questions about growing ferns. Reservations are not necessary. Contact Shirley Gay at [shirleywg@comcast.net] or 703-920-1913.

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

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Parkland preservation and acquisition are funded by bonds in Fairfax County. New ball fields, golf courses and recreation centers are funded by the same bonds. Citizens have an opportunity to influence how bond money is spent at public hearings held in each county district. Needless to say, sports groups are the best-organized and most vocal proponents for their wants. Sadly, although parks are visited by 80% of the population and passive recreation (walking) is the #1 activity among county residents, very few people speak out for open space and parks at the hearings.

Right now, the Fairfax County Park Authority is holding public hearings to determine what the \$50 million 2004 bond will finance, if it is approved by voters. An additional \$10 million is being considered on behalf of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. Slated to finance the Capital Improvement Plan for the next four years, the bond would cover renovation of park facilities, capital development and land acquisition. As land is quickly devoured for development, acquiring environmentally important habitats becomes more pressing. Protection and preservation of existing parkland is equally important in ensuring that those lands retain their ecological value. An important issue to be stressed is that the Cross County Trail not be paved in the three biologically significant and sensitive stream valleys that it is slated to blaze through, (Accotink, Difficult Run, and Pohick).

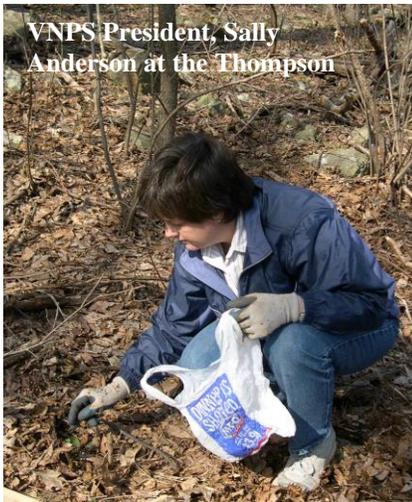
Our parks, present and future, need your support. There are two more hearings on this bond issue, one on May 3rd at the Franconia Governmental Center and one on May 6th at Lake Braddock Secondary School. Please try to attend one and let your voice be heard for parks and land acquisition. Call the Public Information Office, 703-324-8662, to sign up in advance to speak at the hearings. If you can't testify, written comments will be accepted until June 7th. Direct your letters to Ms. Lynn S. Tadlock, Director, Planning and Development Division, Fairfax County Park Authority, 12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 421, Fairfax, VA 22035. Email comments should be sent to Parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Please support parks and land acquisition; we have such incredible biodiversity in Fairfax County deserving of protection and preservation. **Marianne Mooney**

NATIVE ARBORETUM IN MCLEAN

After several months of negotiations, the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) has reached an agreement with our friends at Earth Sangha to establish a native arboretum at the 20-acre Marie Butler Leven Preserve in McLean. The arboretum will be a comprehensive display of woodland plants native to the mid-Atlantic piedmont covering the full spectrum of our native forest flora. The arboretum will be an outdoor educational resource unique in our area. Earth Sangha has agreed to operate the site consistent with the master plan and under the guidance of an advisory board. The Reserve, on Kirby Road in McLean, is within the Pimmit Run Watershed.

GARLIC MUSTARD PULL AT THE THOMPSON: JUNE 5



VNPS President, Sally Anderson at the Thompson

To complement the efforts of the Piedmont Chapter of VNPS, a day to remove garlic mustard weeds from the G.R. Thompson Wildlife Management Area in Linden, VA, has been scheduled for Saturday, June 5th, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM.

The Thompson WMA is famous for its showy trilliums and other wildflowers, but alien garlic mustard weeds have invaded the woods. By June 5th the biennial plants will have started to go to seed. By removing them, the infestation can be reduced in future years. In March, Piedmont Chapter volunteers and others removed the over-wintering garlic mustard rosettes in some areas. Those plants that escaped eradication will be easily spotted in June. For details and directions, please contact Carol Shuh at (703) 903-9046 or at shuhc@state.gov.

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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.

Ecologist Gary Fleming on the Potomac River Gorge: "This is the finest forest I've seen in the Virginia Piedmont."

UNIQUE NATURAL PLANT COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Unusual geologic features and resulting soils develop unique plant communities, which are important to preserve. Portions of **Fairfax County**, along with some of the neighboring counties and the District of Columbia, are located in a geological area called the Culpeper Basin. The basin is a narrow strip within the Piedmont, underlain with diabase rock that produces unusual soils and supports distinctive natural communities, including some rare plant species. Because of our deep interest in biodiversity conservation, the Potowmack Chapter of VNPS provided a grant to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Natural Heritage to conduct inventories of vegetation in this basin.

During the study Gary Fleming and Karen Patterson of the Division of Natural Heritage sampled 42 vegetation plots, containing 441 vascular plant taxa. They classified nine forested community types and one herbaceous community of rock outcrops in the basin.

The results of this study, published this April, indicate that despite the encroachment of development and invasive species, highly significant natural areas and occurrences of natural communities may still be found in the northern Virginia Culpeper Basin. The Low-elevation Basic Outcrop Barrens community is a northern Virginia endemic known from only a few sites and “warrants the highest degree of protection,” as it is critically imperiled throughout its range in the world. A large example of this plant community occurs on a large diabase outcrop along Ellick Run in Fairfax County’s recently acquired **Hunter-Hacor Assemblage**. In addition, the Basic Oak-Hickory Forest (Northern Hardpan Variant) and the Upland Depression Swamp (Northern Piedmont Type) have emerged as communities that are “nearly endemic to the Culpeper Basin and must be considered quite rare globally.” Outstanding examples of the basic oak-hickory community occur in Fairfax County in **Cub Run Stream Valley Park**, **Sugarland Run Stream Valley Park**, and the recently acquired **Hunter-Hacor Assemblage**. One site studied in the **Cub Run Stream Valley Park** contained the greatest number of taxa (125) ever recorded in a 400 square meter upland plot in Virginia. The Upland Depression Swamp community of the Culpeper Basin is now ranked “G-2,” meaning it is “critically imperiled throughout its range,” and “protection of viable occurrences of this community in northern Virginia is a high priority.” Examples of this type can also be found in Fairfax County in the **Ellanor C. Lawrence Park** and the **Hunter-Hacor Assemblage**. Let’s do all we can to protect these unique areas.

POTOWMACK CHAPTER PARTICIPATING IN AUDUBON AT HOME

Our Potowmack Chapter is one of the Northern Virginia nature-related organizations cooperating with the Fairfax Audubon Society in an exciting and challenging opportunity to highlight Northern Virginia’s remaining natural habitats and offer concrete remedies to help such habitats. Fairfax Audubon has been selected as a lead chapter in the “Audubon at Home” initiative. The fundamental goal is to stimulate creation of healthier natural habitats for people and wildlife (hopefully changing some minds and generating beneficial actions).

Fairfax Audubon Society, the local chapter of the National Audubon Society, has received a Federal grant and is working in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. The grant requires production of a project book and related materials which will draw public attention to nature in Northern Virginia and to sites (large and small, public and private) that exemplify how healthy wildlife habitats can be maintained and enhanced. The book will use illustrations and photographs to enhance information on individual and community efforts, showing what can be done with areas of land which have escaped the rapid development in Northern Virginia. A website and collateral materials will be frequently updated to publicize what has been done for local natural areas. An exhaustive list of resources and materials will be included in the book and on the website.

To date, a number of prospective sites have been studied, partner organizations have been recruited, and a draft plan has been developed. Tours, workshops, demonstration events, and media and educational presentations will be prepared to introduce this program to as wide an audience as possible. Promoting healthy habitats for homes and communities includes discouraging overuse of pesticides and herbicides, encouraging preservation of natural areas, removing invasive plants, cultivating native species, and improving habitat for birds, butterflies, and other wildlife.

The major task in the next month or so is to catalog as many Northern Virginia wildlife-friendly sites as possible. Sites may be as small as a balcony butterfly garden or as large as a county park. Possible properties include private gardens of individuals; grounds of businesses, schools, churches or hospitals; or restored meadows on public lands.

Our chapter contact person is Barbara Farron. Please e-mail her at bfarron@compuserve.com or call 703-354-9668 if you would like to help with the Audubon at Home project. We are also seeking owners of wildlife-friendly sites who would be willing to spend time talking with others and displaying their gardens, and/or having their habitat photographed and described for publication.

FAIRFAX COUNTY’S DIFFICULT RUN

Native plant enthusiasts were greeted by summer-like weather for the Chapter’s Wildflower walk on April 17th. Rod Simmons led



participants along one of the Potomac Gorge's most scenic stream valleys, Difficult Run. Hillsides covered in yet-to-bloom mountain laurel were edged by blooming trailing arbutus, silene, saxifrage and bluets. Rod pointed out several American elms in the floodplain that, because they were in their proper habitat, did not succumb to the disease that wiped out elms planted along city streets. Boulders of meta-graywacke and mica schist, typical rocks of the river, made scenic falls that rivaled Great Falls, at least in beauty. All the participants enjoyed the walk and the opportunity to explore the botanical wonders of the Potomac Gorge. Below are some of our spring treats from Difficult Run:

Forbs

- Rue anemone, *Anemonella thalictroides*
- Yellow trout lily, *Erythronium americanum*
- Spring beauty, *Claytonia virginica*
- Star chickweed, *Stellaria pubera*
- Early saxifrage, *Saxafraga virginiensis*
- Hispid buttercup, *Ranunculus hispidus*
- Sea oats or wild oats, *Chasmanthium latifolium*
- Alumroot, *Heuchera sp.* (leaf)
- Lyre leafed sage, *Salvia lyrata* (leaf)
- Wild pink, *Silene caroliniana*
- Robin's plantain, *Erigeron pulchellus* (leaf)
- Field parsnip, *Thaspium sp.*
- Yellow star grass, *Hypoxis hirsuta* (leaf)
- Trailing arbutus, *Epigaea repens*
- Partridge berry, *Mitchella repens* (leaf)
- Toothwort, *Dentaria sp.* (at least two different)
- Sessile bellwort, *Uvularia perfoliata*
- Sweet Cicely, *Osmorhiza clatonii* (leaf)
- Wild stonecrop, *Sedum ternatum*(leaf)
- Creeping or moss phlox, *Phlox subulata*
- Bashful bullrush, *Scirpus verecundus*
- Shining clubmoss, *Lycopodium lucidulum*

Several ferns

Shrubs and Trees

- Serviceberry, *Amelanchier arborea*
- American elm, *Ulmus americana*
- Bitternut hickory, *Carya cordiformis*

- River birch, *Betula nigra*
- Box elder, *Acer negunda*
- Possum-haw viburnum, *Viburnum nudum* (leaf)
- Black haw viburnum, *Viburnum prunifolium* (leaf)

Butterfly

- Eastern tiger swallowtail

Birds

- Black vulture
- Turkey vulture
- Downy woodpecker
- Blue-grey gnatcatcher
- Belted kingfisher
- Yellow-throated warbler
- Louisiana waterthrush



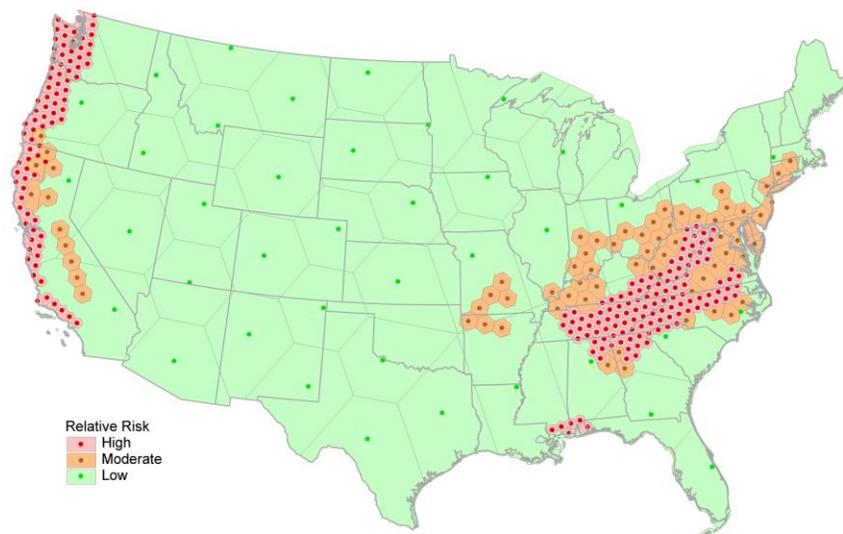
FERN TIPS FROM MARGARET CHATHAM

For years, I've planted special ferns and wildflowers in my woods, carefully finding a spot between major tree roots,, mixing in a little humus that I think the plants might like, settling them and watering them in, only to find my precious plant upside down, high and dry when I come back in a day or two to check on it. Some squirrel has come along in the meantime and decided to dig where I dug to see what was so interesting. Most times, the squirrel seems to have no interest in the plant at all. It was just in the way of exploring that fascinating hole. Now, after planting some new baby, the last thing I do is place a rock right beside it. If the plant's structure allows, I put the rock right over some of its roots. So far, knock on wood, no squirrel has dug up a plant that has a rock in my yard. As added benefits, the rock makes some of the tiniest plants easier to locate, and pouring water over the rock is a nice, gentle way to water.

SUDDEN OAK DEATH UPDATE

Sudden oak death, caused by a fungus-like pathogen called *Phytophthora ramorum*, has already killed hundreds of thousands of trees in California. And it not only affects oaks it

Preliminary SOD Risk/Hazard Map



affects redwoods, Douglas fir, laurels, rhododendron, azaleas, and more; and it is present in other trees, shrubs, soils, and streams. The U. S. Forest Service has designated the following parts of the country as high risk from the disease: the Pacific coast from Canada to almost Los Angeles; the Gulf Coast portions of Mississippi and Alabama; and the southern Appalachians reaching from northern Alabama and Georgia to the Mason-Dixon line, and from western Tennessee to the Virginia piedmont.

The pathogen spreads easily. A recent test showed the microbe on the shoes of nine out of 10 hikers leaving a California park. It is now in Oregon and was discovered in the largest wholesale plant nursery in California, which has shipped plants all over the United States. According to the American Nursery and Landscape Association as of 3 April, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service had placed holds on 132,000 plants in 613 nurseries in 39 states and the District of Columbia that have received suspect plant material. Testing is being done. As of the date of this letter, five nurseries in Florida had infected plants, six nurseries in Oregon, 2 in Canada, and one in Georgia. Unfortunately, most of the plants shipped out of California were to retail outlets – shipped last spring. The exception is plants shipped to the Deep South. Consequently, most of the plants (80-90%) are in someone's backyard. States will likely be doing testing. Imagine if Sudden Oak Death hits our forested lands in the East. The results would be catastrophic.

ARLINGTON'S RiP PROJECT

Sat. May 8. Bluemont Second Saturday with a twist. 9am to noon. Bluemont Park neighbors and other volunteers will not only remove invasives, they will also plant natives. An exciting step towards restoration of the Bluemont Junction site! 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 Huennkens at 703-524-3853 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



Bob Yaccovissi with pile of English ivy at Lubber Run Park

LOCAL EVENTS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:

Every Sunday 12:30 April - October: Beginners' Bird, Butterfly Walks at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, 9750 Meadowlark Gardens Ct., Vienna, Virginia. Walk into the winged worlds of birds and butterflies with a free, introductory guided stroll with butterfly and bird photographer William B. Folsom. Learn how the Gardens attract these enticing, almost magical creatures. Rental binoculars are available at the Visitor Center. Weather dependent; call 703-255-3631 to confirm walk plans. Reservations are not required. The walk is free but admission to the Gardens is \$4/adult, \$2/child age 7-17 and \$2/senior age 60 or older. *Meadowlark Botanical Gardens is between Routes 1 and 123, off of Beulah Road and south of the Dulles Access Road*

May 8 Invasive removal/cleanup Dyke Marsh, Alexandria, 10am to noon. Call Brooke Andrews of the Northern Virginia Senior Environment Corps at 703 -549-1607 Ext. 141 for information. Registration: All volunteers need to register upon arrival. The registration table is located near the brown bathrooms next to the benches and water fountain in Belle Haven Park (left of the parking lot). Individual volunteers will need to fill out a National Park Service Volunteer Agreement Form. Volunteers under the age of 18 must get an approval form signed by a parent or guardian. What to bring: The National Park Service will provide all trash bags and gloves. Volunteers should wear pants, sturdy shoes, bug spray and bring sunscreen if needed. If working with invasive plants please also wear a long-sleeve shirt

May 9 Mother's Day Wildflower Walk Potomac Overlook Park 2 PM. Give Mother an entire park-full of colorful spring wildflowers on this free, naturalist-led walk through NVRPA's nature preserve. Reservations are required; call 703-528-5406. *To reach NVRPA's Potomac Overlook Regional Park, take I-66 to the Lee Highway-Spout Run exit; turn left on Lee Highway, right on Military Road, continue on Military and turn left when it divides; turn right on Marcey Road and park at the end of the cul-de-sac in the lot for Potomac Overlook Regional Park*

June 12 Invasive removal/ Four Mile Run Park, Alexandria, 10am to noon Call Brooke Andrews of the Northern Virginia Senior Environment Corps at 703 -549-1607 Ext. 141 for information. Volunteers should wear pants, sturdy shoes. If working with invasive plants please also wear a long-sleeve shirt. Volunteers should park in the cul-de-sac at the end of Edison St. and the registration table will be set up along the path. From Alexandria on Rt. 1 (Patrick St.) heading north make a LEFT onto E Glebe Rd., a RIGHT onto Commonwealth Ave., a LEFT onto Reed Ave. and RIGHT onto Edison St. Go to the end of the street and park in cul-de-sac. They will have a table set up with signs.

June 12 Tree identification Hike Potomac Overlook Regional Park. 2 p.m. Hike with an NVRPA naturalist and discover the clues to the identity of local trees. Reservations are required for this free activity; call 703-528-5406. *To reach NVRPA's Potomac Overlook Regional*

Park, take I-66 to the Lee Highway-Spout Run exit; turn left on Lee Highway, right on Military Road, continue on Military and turn left when it divides; turn right on Marcey Road and park at the end of the cul-de-sac in the lot for Potomac Overlook Regional Park.

June 29-August 31—Ferns and Fern Allies USDA Graduate School; Woodend Sanctuary, Chevy Chase. 7 – 9pm. Classes plus field trips: \$295 Instructor, TBA.. Call 202-314-3320 or register on line at www.grad.usda.gov

RENEWING? Send a check for \$30 to VNPS Membership Chairman, 400 Blandly Farm Lane, Unit 2, Boyce, Virginia 22620
WANT TO JOIN THE CHAPTER LISTSERV? Send an e-mail to Mary Ann Lawler at malawler@aol.com 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>



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

Chapter Events Calendar

- May 15 Plant Sale 9 to 3
Green Spring
- May 22 Magnolia Bog
cleanup, Barcroft
Park 10 am
- June 12 Plummers Island
Elizabeth Wells
9 to noon
- Jun 24 Ferns and Fern ID
7 P.M.
Green Spring

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