

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 23, No 4

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

July/August 2005



RUNNYMEDE CHAPTER WALK, SATURDAY AUGUST 27

Site Registry Chair, Rod Simmons will lead a field trip at Runnymede Park along Sugarland Run in Herndon on Saturday, August 27, from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm. Runnymede Park is a VNPS Registry Site, notable for its wealth of flora. Much of its diversity results from the diabase soils and the variety of habitats, many of which are rare in Virginia. It is home to over 100 species of birds, deer, fox, and other wildlife. Over 450 plant species are listed in the Runnymede Flora. Dozens of summer wildflowers should be in bloom. Grasses, trees, and shrubs will also be in bloom or in fruit. The park has good access with lots of trails. Bring water, lunch, and be prepared for sun and insects. We may have a special treat of New Jersey tea or Spicebush tea with our lunch.

Directions: From either Route 7 or Fairfax County Parkway, take Route 606 (Baron Cameron Avenue/Elden Street) west into Herndon. Turn right on Herndon Parkway. Runnymede Park will be on the right in about half a mile

ENCOURAGING RESULTS FROM INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL

Steve Young, VNPS member, member of the Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council, and a volunteer with Arlington County's RiP program, reports that after he spent three years removing multiflora rose and winged euonymous from a seepage area near Long Branch in Carlyn Springs Park, park naturalists have found dwarf ginseng (*Panax trifolius*). (See photo on the right.) It hasn't been seen in the park in years. Ferns are returning to the area, as well. Thank you, Steve, and all the other wonderful volunteers who have helped remove invasive exotics!



SAVE THE DATE: SEPTEMBER 10 IS THE FALL PLANT SALE AT GREEN SPRING.

“Several recent studies have independently come to a consistent and deeply troubling conclusion: The diversity of life on our planet is declining rapidly, and in the absence of well-targeted conservation efforts, that trend will surely accelerate in the decades ahead. Loss of habitat, invasive species, global warming, pollution, overexploitation, disease, and perhaps other unidentified stressors present a massive threat to global biodiversity. The world's ecosystems provide services whose estimated value is in the trillions of dollars annually. The loss of a significant fraction of these services would have far-reaching biological and economic consequences. Preventing that outcome will require a global response that far exceeds current actions”

Mark Schaeffer, president and chief executive officer of NatureServe in Arlington, Virginia, from an editorial in the journal *Science*. (For complete text see: www.natureserve.org).

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE:

It's summer and the cool weather and beauty of spring wildflowers has been replaced by heat and humidity. Many wildflowers are still in bloom, attracting hummingbirds, butterflies and other pollinators. The frantic pace of spring has given over to the slower rhythms of summer but the board is keeping the chapter moving ever forward. We're really committed to the Potomac Gorge invasives project and hope to add some wildflower walks in conjunction with the work parties. We're searching for new ways to reach out to people and build awareness of native flora. And we're always looking for new ideas and volunteers, which are probably the two hardest things to come up with. If you have any ideas or would like to volunteer to help out on a project, please give me a call or email me at m.mooney@comcast.net. Enjoy the summer!

Marianne Mooney

NORTH AMERICA'S MOST VULNERABLE POLLINATORS

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation released its *Red List of Pollinator Insects of North America* in May. This is a list of pollinators at risk of extinction and in need of conservation. The Red List includes 115 species and subspecies: 57 butterflies, 2 moths, and 56 bees from across the US and Canada. (Eleven species are in Virginia.) Each species has a brief status review that distills the current state of knowledge of life history, distribution, threats, conservation needs, and research needs into a single document. The status reviews also include discussions of taxonomy and identification and lists of contacts, publications, and websites.

Pollinators are keystone species in terrestrial ecosystems. They provide the critical ecological function that guarantees rich and diverse plant communities, which, in turn, provide food and other commodities for us, and form habitat for wildlife. Many of the pollinators included in the Xerces Red List suffer from destruction of their habitat for intensive agriculture and urbanization. Pesticides have negatively impacted pollinator populations, and pose a continuing threat. Introduced diseases and parasites are a leading factor in the decline of several species.

The Red List of Pollinator Insects of North America is published as a CD-ROM. To view the complete *Red List* go to: www.xerces.org. To order a copy on CD ROM, send \$10 to the Xerces Society at 4828 SE Hawthorne Blvd. Portland, OR 97215, and ask for the *Red List of Pollinator Insects of North America*.

W&OD TRAIL TREE PRUNING AND REMOVAL AGREEMENT

For those who may not have already seen or heard about the agreement regarding tree cutting along the W&OD trail, details are available from the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority website:

- [Press Release Announcing the Signing of Vegetation Management Agreement with Dominion Virginia Power \(including Highlights of W&OD NVRPA-Dominion Power Vegetation Management Agreement\)](http://www.nvrpa.org/temp/pressreleasedominion.pdf)
- [Vegetation Management Agreement with Dominion Virginia Power](http://www.nvrpa.org/vegetationmanagementagreement.html)

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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.

WANT TO JOIN THE CHAPTER LISTSERV? Send an e-mail to STONE.SYL.VIA@NMNH.SI.EDU and in the message section write subscribe to vnps-pot, your e-mail address, and your full name. Or visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/vnps-pot/join>

ON SILPHIUMS: from *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold (published in 1949)

"Every July I watch eagerly a certain country graveyard that I pass in driving to and from my farm. It is time for a prairie birthday, and in one corner of this graveyard lives a surviving celebrant of that once important event.

It is an ordinary graveyard, bordered by the usual spruces, and studded with the usual pink granite or white marble headstones, each with the usual Sunday bouquet of red or pink geraniums. It is extraordinary only in being triangular instead of square, and in harboring, within the sharp angle of its fence, a pin-point remnant of the native prairie on which the graveyard was established in the 1840s. Heretofore unreachable by scythe or mower, this yard-square relic of original Wisconsin gives birth, each July, to a man-high stalk of compass plant or cutleaf Silphium, spangled with saucer-sized yellow blooms resembling sunflowers. It is the sole remnant in the western half of our county. What a thousand acres of Silphiums looked like when they tickled the bellies of the buffalo is a question never again to be answered, and perhaps not even asked.

When I passed the graveyard again, the fence had been removed by a road crew, and the Silphium cut. It is easy now to predict the future; for a few years my Silphium will try in vain to rise above the mowing machine, and then it will die. With it will die the prairie epoch.

The Highway Department says that 100,000 cars pass yearly over this route during the three summer months when the Silphium is in bloom. In them must ride at least 100,000 people who have "taken" what is called history, and perhaps 25,000 who have "taken" what is called botany. Yet I doubt whether a dozen have seen the Silphium, and of these hardly one will notice its demise. If I were to tell a preacher of the adjoining church that the road crew has been burning history books in his cemetery, under the guise of mowing weeds, he would be amazed and uncomprehending. How could a weed be a book?

This is one little episode in the funeral of the native flora, which in turn is one episode in the funeral of the floras of the world. Mechanized man, oblivious of floras, is proud of his progress in cleaning up the landscape on which, willy-nilly, he must live out his days. It might be wise to prohibit at once all teaching of real botany and real history, lest some future citizen suffer qualms about the floristic price of his good life.

The erasure of a human subspecies is largely painless -- to us -- if we know little enough about it. A dead Chinaman is of little import to us whose awareness of things Chinese is bounded by an occasional dish of chow mein. We grieve only for what we know. The erasure of Silphium from western Dane County is no cause for grief if one knows it only as a name in a botany book.

Silphium first became a personality to me when I tried to dig one up to move to my farm. It was like digging an oak (or a black walnut) sapling. After half an hour of hot grimy labor, the root was still enlarging, like a great vertical sweet potato. As far as I know, that Silphium root went clear through to bedrock. I got no Silphium, but I learned by what elaborate underground stratagems, it contrives to weather the prairie drouths.

I next planted Silphium seeds, which are large, meaty, and taste like sunflower seeds. They came up promptly, but after five years of waiting the seedlings are still juvenile, and have not yet borne a flower stalk. Perhaps it takes a decade for a Silphium to reach flowering age; how old, then, was my pet plant in the cemetery? It may have been older than the oldest tombstone, which is dated 1850. Perhaps it watched the fugitive Black Hawk retreat from the Madison lakes to the Wisconsin River; it stood on the route of that famous march. Certainly it saw the successive funerals of the local pioneers as they retired, one, by one, to their repose beneath the bluestem. I once saw a power shovel, while digging a roadside ditch, sever the "sweet-potato" root of a Silphium plant. The root soon sprouted new leaves, and eventually it again produced a flower stalk. This explains why this plant, which never invades new ground, is nevertheless sometimes seen on recently graded roadsides. Once established, it apparently withstands almost any kind of mutilation except continued grazing, mowing or plowing.

Why does Silphium disappear from grazed areas? I once saw a farmer turn his cows into a virgin prairie meadow previously used only sporadically for mowing wild hay. The cows cropped the Silphium to the ground before any other plant was visibly eaten at all. One can imagine that the buffalo once had the same preference for Silphium, but he brooked no fences to confine his nibblings all summer long to one meadow. In short, the buffalo's pasturing was discontinuous, and therefore tolerable to Silphium.

It is a kind providence that has withheld a sense of history from the thousands of species of plants and animals that have exterminated each other to build the present world. The same kind of providence now withholds it from us. Few grieved when the last buffalo left Wisconsin, and few will grieve when the last Silphium follows him to the lush prairies of the never-never land."

Editor's note: Silphiums are generally Midwestern prairie plants. The only Silphium which is indigenous to our Northern Virginia area is *Silphium trifoliatum* (whorled rosinweed). *Silphium perfoliatum* (cup plant) can be found in southwestern Virginia and *Silphium compositum michaux* can be found in south central Virginia.



HELP WANTED AT THE PROPAGATION BEDS We're look for a few good people, who are free especially on Wednesday mornings (but also on Saturdays) to help out at the VNPS propagation beds at Green Spring Gardens Park. We're there from 9:30 to noon; so come anytime in between. We share knowledge of the native plants, seedlings that need a home,

occasional snacks, and especially, camaraderie. It's a great opportunity to learn more about our native plants. You need not be an expert--none of us were when we began our work. Call us up and let's discuss it. Laura Beaty 703 534-8746

PLANT SALES, SPRING AND SUMMER

Notice how all the rain this spring has made our gardens so lush? How about sharing some of this bounty with the propagation beds for our September sale at Green Spring on September 10? Thanks in advance for any contributions.

The following list shows the number of plants sold at our May plant sale at Green Spring, kept track of by our stalwart plant accountant/controller, Margaret Chatham:

- Shade plants (including ferns and shade grasses) 756 (highest in Margaret's records, going back to 5/00)
- Sun plants 296 (about what we've done the past 2 spring sales)
- Woodies (including trees-for-free) 56 (about half of last year's sales)
- Total 1,108 plants

Many, many thanks to our members for all the donations, preparing plants for sale, and working at the sale.

Plant donations: Sandy Austin, Laura Beaty, Tiana Camfiord, Margaret Chatham, Alan Ford, Pat Hicks, Mary Ann Lawler, Marianne Mooney, Esther Laidig, Lesa Schmidt, Sally Sieracki, Rod Simmons, and Billie Trump.

Prepared plants for sale and/or worked at sale: Rob Aldrich, Debby Apling, Lura Alsalam, Laura Beaty, Tiana Camfiord, Margaret Chatham, Roberta Day, Dusty Duke, Susan Jewell, Chris King, Mary Ann Lawler, Marianne Mooney, Louis Nichols, Lisa Palmer, Laura Reichenbaugh, Billie Trump, and Ginny Yacovissi.

CORNUS CANADENSIS, THE FASTEST PLANT ON THE PLANET

Biologists at Oberlin and Williams Colleges, with a little help from a physicist, have reported that the method used by the bunchberry dogwood (*Cornus canadensis*) to disperse pollen makes it the fastest plant movement known. "The bunchberry flower can open in under 0.4 milliseconds--which is several hundred times speedier than the snap of a Venus fly trap," according to Oberlin's Assistant Professor of Biology, Marta Laskowski. Dr. Joan Edwards, a Williams College biology professor and an author of a paper describing the finding in the journal *Nature*, said a student, Sarah Klionsky, made the discovery accidentally while doing field work in Michigan. She was examining a patch of bunchberry dogwood, low plants with clusters of very small flowers, each only about a tenth of an inch across. Dr. Edwards said "She stuck her nose into this flower, jumped back and said 'Something went poof!' " Dr. Edwards says the system probably enhances pollination for the plant. The release can be triggered by the weight of a large insect like a bumblebee. "It just blasts the bumblebee with this shower of pollen," she said. Since bees and other insects eat pollen, the plastering ensures there's no way all the pollen can be eaten before the insect visits another plant and some of it rubs off. "Isn't that incredible?" Dr. Edwards said. "It's just a beautifully designed flower." To see a video clip of the explosive force of the plant, see: <http://www.oberlin.edu/news-info/05may/expflower.html> *Editor's note: Cornus canadensis occurs only in three western counties of Virginia: Bath, Rockingham, and Albemarle.*

LORNE PETERSON, OUTSTANDING ADVOCATE FOR NATIVE PLANTS.

Congratulations to Lorne Peterson, who received an Outstanding Volunteer Award for the native plant restoration project he worked on in the Gulf Branch Natural Area in Arlington, Virginia. Lorne is a VNPS member and contributor to Potowmack News. From his citation: "With the hard work of volunteers like Lorne, the park can be saved from destruction from invasive plants, and utilized for the increasingly important environmental educational programs for the public. Lorne has personally spent untold hours removing vines and other exotic plants from his Native Plant Garden and also has been diligently working to clear areas in a wider circle in the park. Native plants are then able to re-establish themselves in these restored areas. In addition Lorne has researched the native flora of the area and then sought out appropriate native species to plant in the Native Plant Garden and other areas of the park. These activities have greatly enhanced the richness of the habitat. Much of this work is tedious as the plants must be pulled out by hand in order to exterminate them. Yet Lorne doesn't see his service as volunteering; he rather prefers to describe himself as 'a resident taking care of the park'. He is a model citizen for stewardship of our natural heritage. Lorne has asked us to thank the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society "for all I have learned from the persons who plant and take care of the native plant propagation place at Green Spring Gardens." He also thanks the Potowmack Chapter members, board officers and committee chair persons for sharing their knowledge and for their encouraging words.

ARLINGTON'S RiP PROJECT

A thousand thanks to Jan Ferrigan, Kasey Spriggs, parks staff, Americorps and other volunteers who helped remove or treat the following invasives in Arlington this spring, particularly those who helped in the Magnolia Bog.

Ailanthus altissima (Tree of heaven) Old Hume School, Ft. CF Smith, Yorktown Blvd Gateway Park, Prospect Hill, Spout Run/Lorcom Lane, , Strafford Park (HB Woodlawn), Hillside Park

Akebia quinata (five-leafed akebia) Glen Carlyn Park

Alliaria petiolata (Garlic mustard,) Barcroft Park magnolia bog, Long Branch Elementary school, Yorktown Blvd Gateway Park

Ampelopsis brevipedunculata (Porcelain berry) Spout Run/Lorcom Lane, Glen Carlyn Park, , Strafford Park (HB Woodlawn), Barcroft magnolia bog
Euonymus fortunei (Creeping euonymous) Aurora Hills
Hedera helix (English ivy) Glen Carlyn Park, Barcroft magnolia bog, Bluemont Junction, Yorktown Blvd Gateway Park, Aurora Hills, Hillside Park
Lonicera japonica (Japanese honeysuckle shrub and vines), Bluemont Junction, Old Hume School, Yorktown Blvd Gateway Park, Strafford Park (HB Woodlawn), Barcroft magnolia bog, Aurora Hills, Hillside Park, Prospect Hill, , Strafford Park (HB Woodlawn)
Microstegium vimineum (Japanese stiltgrass) Glen Carlyn Park, Barcroft magnolia bog
Morus alba (white mulberry) Prospect Hill,
Polygonum cuspidatum (Japanese knotweed) Barcroft magnolia bog
Polygonum perfoliatum (Mile-a-Minute) Ft. CF Smith.
Pueraria Montana (Kudzu) Alcova
Ranunculus ficaria (Lesser celandine): Barcroft Park magnolia bog, Long Branch Nature Center, Zachary Taylor Park, Gulf Branch Nature Center, Glen Carlyn Nature Center
Rosa multiflora (multiflora rose) Gulf Branch, Barcroft magnolia bog, Bluemont Junction, Prospect Hill, Spout Run/Lorcom Lane, Strafford Park (HB Woodlawn), Hillside Park

Wisteria sinensis (Chinese wisteria) Madison Manor, Zachary Taylor, Old Hume School

Sat. July 9 - Second Saturdays at Bluemont Park 9am - Noon. 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.

Thurs. July 28 Invasive Plant ID Walk 6:30 -7:30 pm Gulf Branch Natural Area Join us for a hike through one of Arlington's beautiful stream valley parks and become more familiar with the different invasive plant species that are threatening our natural areas. Learn identifying characteristics for kudzu, Japanese knotweed, Japanese honeysuckle, exotic wisteria and much more. Walking shoes and insect repellent recommended. Free. Pre-registration not required but appreciated. Call 703 228 7636 to register or for more info. Gulf Branch 3608 N. Military Rd. Arlington.

Sat. Aug 13 - Second Saturdays at Bluemont Park 9am - Noon. pm (See above for details)

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:

July and August Long Branch Nature Center in Arlington is seeking 3-4 VNPS volunteers during the months of July and August. We are looking for folks who would be willing to work one weekday each month for 4 hours (8 hours total) to help staff prepare for our big September 11 Native Plant Sale. Tasks may include some general gardening chores, but will mostly focus on digging, potting, and moving plants for the sale. Lots of free plants for those who are willing to help. If interested, call Alonso at 703-228-6535.

Sun., July 3, Potomac Overlook Regional Park Weekend Foray 1 p.m.-4 p.m. Explore the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority's nature preserve in Arlington on a new discovery walk. This free program is for all ages. For more information, call 703-528-5406. *Directions: take I-66 to the Lee Highway-Spout Run exit; turn left on Lee Highway, right on Military Rd., continue on Military and turn left when it divides; turn right on Marcey Rd. and park at the end of the cul-de-sac in the Potomac Overlook Regional Park lot.*

Sun., July 10, 2 p.m. Butterflies & Other Insects of Potomac Overlook Park What attracts these wondrous creatures? Why do they stay? How do they interact with the plants, wildlife and human life of this nature preserve? Reservations required; call 703-528-5406. *For directions see July 3 Foray.*

Sun., July 17, Potomac Overlook Regional Park Weekend Foray 1 p.m.-4 p.m. Explore the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority's nature preserve in Arlington on a new discovery walk. This free program is for all ages. For info, call 703-528-5406. *For directions see July 3 Foray.*

Sun., July 17, Bees Butterflies, and Blossoms: The Biology of a Partnership 9am -2pm Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Studies in Loudoun County with Cliff Fairweather & Kimberly Winter. Sponsored by Audubon Naturalist Society \$31 for non-members. For Info. call: 301-652-9188 x16

Sat. July 23, Butterflies and Wildflowers of Harper's Ferry 9:30am -3:30pm. Stephanie Mason and Pat Durkin. . Sponsored by Audubon Naturalist Society \$38 for non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

Sat. July 23, Introduction to Summer Wildflowers 9am - 2pm with Cris Fleming at Great Falls Park, VA. Nonmembers \$32 . Sponsored by Audubon Naturalist Society \$31 for non-members. For Info. call: 301-652-9188 x16

Sun. Jul. 24, The Summer Meadow 8:00am to noon. Stephanie Mason and Cathy Stragar. Sponsored by Audubon Naturalist Society \$28 for non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

Wed July 27 - Aug 17 Summer Wildflower Identification 7pm - 9pm with field trips. Instructor: Cris Fleming, Audubon Naturalist Society, Woodend Sanctuary, Chevy Chase \$215. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

Thurs. July 28; Sat. July 30 The Natural and Cultural History of the Ag Reserve. Thurs. 7:30-9:30 pm; Sat. full-day field trip. Stephanie Mason, Dolores Milmo, Melanie Choukas-Bradley. Sponsored by Audubon Naturalist Society \$46 for non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

Sun., Aug. 7, Potomac Overlook Regional Park Weekend Foray 1 p.m.-4 p.m. Explore the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority's nature preserve in Arlington on a new discovery walk. This free program is for all ages. For information, call 703-528-5406. *For directions see July 3 Foray.*

Sat. Aug. 13 - Dyke Marsh Invasives removal Alexandria, 10am to noon Call Amber Hollingsworth of the Northern Virginia Senior Environment Corps at 703 -549-1607 Ext. 141 for information. Register near the bathrooms in Belle Haven Park (left of the parking lot). The National Park Service will provide all trash bags and gloves. Wear long pants, sturdy shoes, bug spray, and bring sunscreen. If working with invasive plants, wear a long-sleeve shirt.

Sun., Aug. 28, Potomac Overlook Regional Park Weekend Foray 1 p.m.-4 p.m. Explore the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority's nature preserve in Arlington on a new discovery walk. This free program is for all ages. For information, call 703-528-5406. *For directions see July 3 Foray.*

Our VNPS Potowmack Chapter board needs a

Garden Tour Chair and a Conservation Chair for Fairfax County.

The garden tour chair finds gardens and sets up the annual spring tour. The conservation chair keeps the chapter abreast of local conservation issues in Fairfax County. Please give me a call or email if you're interested. Marianne Mooney, m.mooney@comcast.net or 703 534 8179

Invasive Plants: Perspectives, Prescriptions and Partnerships
August 16 and 17, 2005
at the University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA

Invasive plants are a major threat to biological diversity. This conference will provide participants with an understanding of the nature and scope of the invasive plant problem and will concentrate on the most current management tools being used to control them. For a complete brochure, contact the Morris Arboretum at 215-247-5777, ext. 156 or 125 or e-mail at jlm@pobox.upenn.edu. Download a copy of the conference details and registration form from www.ma-eppc.org. Sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council. **VNPS and Virginia DCR are also sponsoring the conference.**

Invasives Control Work Parties at Turkey Run Park along the Potomac!

Remember the 2nd Saturday and 4th Thursday of every month from 10am to 1pm this summer at Turkey Run Park. We will regularly meet at the Park Headquarters lot along the George Washington Parkway at Turkey Run Park and either walk from there or carpool down into other areas of the Park. Wear work gloves and boots or sturdy shoes, and bring water, snacks, and hand saws or loppers if you have them, as well as lunch, if you like. July and August dates are: July 9, July 28, August 12, and August 26. You are always welcome to bring friends. If you have any questions, contact Mary Travaglini at 301-897-8570 PotomacGorgeVol@tnc.org .



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

Chapter Events Calendar

- | | | |
|------|----|---|
| Aug | 11 | Board Meeting
7:30 Green Spring |
| Aug | 27 | Chapter Walk
Runnymede |
| Sept | 10 | Fall Plant Sale
Green Spring |
| Sept | 17 | VNPS State
Annual meeting
Norfolk |

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