

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 29, No. 4

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

July August 2011

THE VALUE OF CHESAPEAKE BAY WETLANDS (U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Chesapeake Bay Field Office)

“Wetlands are semi-aquatic lands, flooded or saturated by water for varying periods of time during the growing season. Because of the presence of water, wetlands are characterized by water-loving plants, called hydrophytes, and periodically saturated or flooded soil known as hydric soil.

Wetlands include bogs, swamps and marshes and shallow water areas of rivers, lakes and ponds. Two major groups of wetlands are found in the Chesapeake Bay watershed: estuarine and palustrine. Estuarine wetlands are tidally-flooded and range in salinity from fresh to salt water. Estuarine wetlands are the marshes found mainly along the shore of the Chesapeake Bay and tidal portions of rivers. Palustrine wetlands are freshwater bogs, marshes, and swamps bordering streams and rivers, filling isolated depressions and fringing lakes and ponds.

Many of the Chesapeake Bay's living resources depend on wetlands for their survival. Large flocks of migratory ducks, geese and swans spend winters using the marshes for feeding and cover. Other wildlife, including muskrats, beaver, otter, ospreys, and various wading, marsh and songbirds rely year round on wetland habitat. Thousands of smaller animals, including aquatic insects, snails, mussels, tiny crustaceans and other important members of the food web thrive in wetland communities.

Wetlands also have important economic and recreational values, since they are vitally important to the production of many finfish and shellfish. Roughly two-thirds of our commercially valuable fish and most shellfish use tidal wetlands as spawning and/or nursery areas.

Controlling flood and storm waters is another important function of wetlands. Fast-moving flood or storm waters are slowed by the vegetation and temporarily stored in wetland areas. Subsequent gradual release of the water minimizes erosion and urban/suburban property damage. As upland runoff and drainage waters pass through wetlands, they are essentially cleansed. This water quality improvement is due to the wetland's ability to process excess nutrients, intercept other pollutants, trap sediment and reduce suspended solids in the overlying water.”

CREATE YOUR OWN WETLAND—A BACKYARD POND

For how-to-do-it information see:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard/bkpond.html>

Four native pond plants:

(*Saururus cernuus* L.) lizard's tail; plant in pot and submerge. For water gardens, plant in containers in shallow water. For natural ponds, set plants or rhizomes in sandy or muddy pond margins under shallow water or in moist, boggy soils. Best in full sun to part shade, but will flower in full shade.

(*Iris versicolor*) Northern blue flag iris. Plant in pot and submerge.

(*Equisetum hyemale* L.) scouring rush horsetail—for pond edges (will spread if not in container) or may be planted in pond in a pot. Equisetum is the single surviving genus of a class of primitive vascular plants that dates back to the mid-Devonian period (350 million years ago).

(*Lemna minor*) duckweed, a free-floating aquatic species with a worldwide presence, including Virginia. Common duckweed forms floating mats of vegetation and helps prevent algae. (Just grab a cupful from a natural pond; it will spread).



"We need the tonic of wildness, — to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and the meadow-hen [American coot] lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground."

Henry David Thoreau

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

The fireflies and black-eyed Susans tell me it is Summer. Not just the calendar, but the hazy days and still evenings with the cicadas singing let me know to slow down and listen. I try to get out and tend the yard as best I can, but mostly I watch the goldfinches perch on the stalks of the **lyre-leaved sage** and pick the seeds right there. I know they will be back when the **Rudbeckia** are done blooming.



This fall as we conclude our year for the Chesapeake, I want to take you to the Marsh. The edge of the water, the flow of the reeds, a most fertile and dynamic zone, where waterfowl and blackbirds share the cattails and the water is constantly moving.

We are hoping to have some opportunities in early September to talk and walk in the Marsh and I want to give you a heads up to watch for these.

I would also like to take a moment to ask for your help. We continue to need interested and willing individuals to join us in making these events happen. Our Board elections are scheduled for October and we always accept volunteers. Give me a call or email if you would consider helping us in any way.



Now it is time to pour a glass of lemonade and watch the catbirds chase each other through the **sumac**. What do I know, it looks like fun. **Alan Ford**

"O-KA-LEEEE!" (from a National Park Service brochure on Dyke Marsh)

Perhaps the most common sound heard in **Dyke Marsh** is the trill of the red-winged blackbird. Commonly associated with wetlands, red-winged blackbirds nest among the cattails (*Typha latifolia*) and feed on insects and seeds.



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<p><i>Potowmack News</i> is published 6 times per year, in January, March, May, July, September, and November. The deadline for submissions is the 15th day of the month prior to publication. Call Mary Ann Lawler for more information 703-684-8622 or e-mail her at malawler0@gmail.com.</p>		

Nearly 300 species of birds have been observed in Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve. As a result, Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve is one of the premier birdwatching spots in the Metropolitan Washington D.C. Area. To date, more than 360 species of **plants** have been recorded in **Dyke Marsh**.

If you would like your newsletter delivered electronically instead of hard copy, send an email to: amford@acm.org

Annals of the City of Alexandria Herbarium: Small Stream Forests of the Fall Line and Coastal Plain

By Rod Simmons, July 2011

[A regular series featuring field botany updates, notable collections, and scientific contributions largely from the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, and Fairfax County, Virginia, but occasionally including other locales in the Washington, D.C. area as well]

The vegetation of alluvial floodplains along the upper reaches of many small to medium-sized streams in Alexandria and surrounding areas of the fall line and inner coastal plain throughout the Washington, D.C. region is largely classified as **Coastal Plain / Piedmont Small Stream Forest: *Liquidambar styraciflua* - *Liriodendron tulipifera* / *Lindera benzoin* / *Arisaema triphyllum* Forest (CEGL004418)**.

Unlike the rich floodplains of large streams and rivers, these perennially-damp forest communities are flooded very rarely by stream overflows and are mainly fed by a mosaic of seeps and springs that emanate from the porous sandy-gravelly soils of slopes along the stream valleys. They occur at the lowest landscape position in the stream valley along banks and flat alluvial benches just above the streams on acidic, sandy-clayey loams, often over underlying clay. They are included within the Palustrine System in the vegetation classification hierarchy (Fleming et al. 2010, Harrison 2004), but are not swamps or bogs.

Vegetation varies somewhat with stream size, soil and moisture conditions, and geography, but Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), and Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) are the dominant canopy trees of this community type. Tulip Tree is characteristic of well-drained sites along small order streams of the fall line and adjoining coastal plain of our area, with Red Maple to a lesser extent. Sweetgum can also occur as a canopy co-dominant, but becomes increasingly important on poorer-drained soils and on the coastal plain. Occasionally, oak species - typically White Oak (*Quercus alba*) near the fall line and Southern Red Oak (*Quercus falcata*) on the coastal plain - and American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) are also co-dominant. Many of the canopy trees are old-age and reach great size.

The understory and shrub layers are usually sparse, with Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) the characteristic shrub. The herbaceous layer is diverse, though large expanses of the forest floor are typically carpeted in lush colonies of New York Fern (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*) (**Figs. 1,2**), intermixed to a lesser extent with Southern Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina* var. *asplenioides*). Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) is frequent in areas not dominated by fern colonies, along with Sessile-leaved Bellwort (*Uvularia sessilifolia*), Patridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*), numerous carices (*Carex* spp.), and other herbaceous plants. Colonies of Dwarf Ginseng (*Panax trifolius*) and Wood Anemone (*Anemone quinquefolia*) are fairly common in spring.

Good examples of this community type occur along the east branch of Turkeycock Run in Lincolnia, near the western edge of the City of Alexandria in Fairfax County; in Alexandria along the tributary through Rynex Nature Area, Taylor Run at Chinquapin Park, and Timber Branch; and along the headwaters of Powhatan Springs at Upton Hill Regional Park in Arlington County. Some of the region's best remaining examples occur along Still Creek and North Branch Still Creek at Greenbelt Park in Prince George's County, Maryland.

As recently as two decades ago, many of these interior stream valleys were largely free of significant populations of invasive exotic plants. However, Japanese Stilt Grass (*Microstegium vimineum*) has since become established and represents a serious threat to the future sustainability of forest communities because of its rampant growth rate, pervasive seed bank, negative effects on soil microorganisms, and ability to thrive in areas of soil disturbance, such as along trails or areas frequented by White-tailed Deer (Brewer 2010).



Fig. 1. Extensive colonies of **New York Fern (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*)** along Still Creek at Greenbelt Park, Prince George's County, Maryland. **Photo by R.H. Simmons.**

A survey of the east branch of Turkeycock Run for possible occurrences of Spinulose Wood Fern (*Dryopteris carthusiana*) and Evergreen Wood Fern (*Dryopteris intermedia*) was conducted in May of this year with Dianne Simmons and Carl and Jerry Taylor. This watershed has a long history of botanical exploration, beginning in the late 19th century. William Palmer collected various plants, including Evergreen Wood Fern, from the Lincolnia area in 1899; Nellie C. Knappen reported flora from Lincolnia in the early 1920s; E.H. Walker collected Magnolia Bog flora, including Long's Rush (*Juncus longii*), from the old sand and gravel mine complex and bog adjoining Turkeycock Run in 1945; H.G. Deignan collected similar flora from this site in 1945; F.R. Fosberg, also in 1945, collected from woodland seeps and a Magnolia Bog along the slope above Turkeycock Run (probably the same site as Walker's); and the author extensively surveyed the uplands and stream valley flora of the watershed in the early 1990s, noting many of the previously documented plants and habitats.

We did not locate any *Dryopteris* species along the east branch of Turkeycock Run, but did rediscover one of William Palmer's historical collections - Canada Mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*) - growing amidst a small colony of Ground Pine (*Dendrolycopodium obscurum*) at the edge of a large woodland seep. This primarily northern and montane species is associated with Magnolia Bog habitats in our region and was collected at Lincolnia by Palmer in 1899 (Simmons 2008). This species is fairly rare in the Washington, D.C. area and was last noted on the coastal plain of northern Virginia in similar habitat at the Franconia Bog by Mark Strong and the author in 1999.



Fig. 2. Large **New York Fern** (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*) glade in Coastal Plain / Piedmont Small Stream Forest along the east branch of Turkeycock Run, Fairfax County, Virginia. **Photo by R.H. Simmons.**

Fosberg's Magnolia Bog remains, but is almost irreparably degraded – the result of channelized stormwater runoff from neighboring Orleans Village Apartments and subsequent tree blowdowns, soil disturbance, and infestations of invasive exotic plants. However, the stream valley becomes much less disturbed northward towards Lincolnia Road and a small, mostly pristine Magnolia Bog and Acidic Seepage Swamp complex was discovered upstream. (The Magnolia Bogs and woodland seeps typically occur along the toe-slopes of hillsides where springs emerge from the sand and gravels and thick impermeable clays of the Potomac Formation.)

Although most Coastal Plain / Piedmont Small Stream Forest communities and forested stream valleys of our area are designated Resource Protection Areas (RPAs), many remain high conservation priorities because of the degradation resulting from increasing urbanization of watersheds; subsequent hydrologic disturbances; placement and maintenance of sewer easements; influx of invasive exotic plants; and destructive and often unnecessary streambank restoration projects, including riparian buffer plantings.

Literature Cited

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- Simmons, R.H. 2008. Annotated checklist of the native vascular flora of the City of Alexandria, Virginia. City of Alexandria Department Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities, Alexandria, VA. <http://alexandriava.gov/22560>

FALLS CHURCH HABITAT RESTORATION TEAM Upcoming Events:

Please join the Falls Church Habitat Restoration Team in restoring the local ecosystem in city parks. We will be removing damaging invasive plants as well as planting natives that benefit our local birds and butterflies.

July 16, 2011 - Crossman Park - 10am-Noon

Crossman Park location – From the intersection of rt. 7 and rt. 29, head north on rt. 29. Turn right on to East Columbia Street then take a left onto Van Buren Street. Enter park from Van Buren Street near the playground.

The City of Falls Church is committed to the letter and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act. To request a reasonable accommodation for any type of disability call 703-248-5016 (TTY 711) For more information: contact Melissa Teates, 703-538-6961 or melanite@verizon.net.

FAIRFAX COUNTY'S INVASIVE MANAGEMENT AREA (IMA) PROGRAM

The IMA program is a volunteer-based project that is working towards habitat restoration. Help us remove invasive plants, learn new species of invasive plants, and work outdoors during the following workdays:

Every Wednesday 2:30 - 5:30 **Lake Accotink** Workday (2nd Wednesday of each month @Americana)

August 27, 10:00 – 12:00 **Pohick Stream Valley** workday

For more information contact: Erin.Stockschlaeder@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-324-8681. Check out the IMA schedule of events and activities at: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/nrp-ima.htm.

ARLINGTON COUNTY RiP PROGRAM.

Free. For ages 9 to adult. Come and help rescue our parks from the alien plant invaders! We meet monthly at the locations listed below. If you have your own garden gloves and tools, please bring them along. Some supplies will be provided. Be sure to come dressed for work, wear sturdy shoes, long pants, long sleeves, and perhaps a hat. You may want to bring along a reusable water bottle. Please register by email or calling to assure that you have the most up-to-date information.

First Saturdays @ Haley Park-OakRidge –Gunston 9 am to 11am

Second Saturdays @ Lacey Woods, 10 am to noon **Second Sundays @ Gulf Branch Nature Center, 2 to 5pm,**

Third Saturdays @ Tuckahoe Park, 10 am to noon **Third Sundays @ Long Branch Nature Center, 2 to 5pm,**

4th Saturdays @ Benj. Banneker Park 10am -noon **Fourth Saturdays @ Barcroft Park, 9:30 - noon**

Register at Sarcher@arlingtonva.us or 702-228-1862. Check the website for details on location:

www.arlingtonva.us/invasiveplants

LOCAL EVENTS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Wed. July 6 through July 27 Summer Wildflower Identification Class night 7-9:30 pm Location: Woodend Sanctuary, MD; Field Trip Dates: July 16 (Comus farms) and July 23 (Sugarloaf). Optional kayaking trip at Fletcher's Cove, July 30. From milkweeds and morning glories to orchids and asters, summer presents a diverse array of wildflowers for study of plant family characteristics and ways to identify different species. Field trips to two scenic locations for summer wildflowers provide an opportunity for practice in the use of identification guides. Previous Spring Flower Identification class or similar course is recommended but not required. Tuition: \$259 Instructor: Melanie Choukas-Bradley To Register Online: http://www.graduateschool.edu/course_details.php?cid=NATH1149E

Sun. July 17 Pollinator Gardens Talk & Tour 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM Adults, ages 14 and up. Come learn how to create a beautiful garden the bees and butterflies would love! We'll discuss which native plants to choose, the benefits they provide, and how (easy it is) to keep them happy. Then we'll stroll over to take a tour of our garden and meet some pollinators in person. Afterwards, feel free to stay and get hands on at our mid-summer work-day, from 3-4pm. For more information: 703-228-3403. Meet at Gulf Branch Nature Center, 3608 Military Rd. Arlington, VA 22207. **\$3 fee due upon registration - free for workers! (See work day below.) Register at <https://registration.arlingtonva.us>. Program #: 642841-A**

Sun. July 17 Pollinator Gardens Work Day 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM Adults, ages 14 and up. Want to know more about native plants? Get hands-on among some of our native wildflowers at our midsummer work day. Come early for the talk & tour. For more information: 703-228-3403. Meet at Gulf Branch Nature Center, 3608 Military Rd, Arlington, VA 22207. **Free**

Thurs. July 21 Introduction to Ferns and Fern Allies (7:30-9:30 pm) Sat. July 23 (full-day field trip)

Leader Cris Fleming. Many ferns and fern relatives such as clubmosses and horsetails occur in eastern woodlands. Identification of the different species is easiest in summer when these non-flowering plants produce spores in unique patterns. Thursday's meeting will include live specimens, and slides of local ferns. The evening session will also include discussion of fern structure and their life cycle, and role in the environment. Saturday's field trip will be to Turkey Run Park in McLean, VA, where over 25 species of ferns and fern allies can be found. Our field trip pace will be slow, but includes some fairly steep uphill and downhill, plus a few rocky stream crossings. Registration required, please use [registration form](#) **Members \$38; nonmembers \$52.50.** For information or to register call: 301-652-9188 x16 or visit: <http://www.audubonnaturalist.org/> for registration form.

Sat. July 23 Bold Native Plants and Their Hybrids. Green Spring Gardens 9:30 am. Instructor: Curator **Brenda Skarphol** Curator Brenda Skarphol guides you through the garden and provides an in-depth look at bold summer natives and hybrids derived from natives. Learn from Green Spring's successes and failures to create habitats and design attractive gardens using these natives and their hybrids. Register online at: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/gsgp/ed-adult.htm>

Sun. July 31. Butterflies and their Host Plants 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Families with children ages 6 and up. Register children and adults; children must register with an adult. Everyone knows Monarchs have to have milkweeds, but what about Tiger Swallowtails? Mourning Cloaks? Red Admirals? Learn about some of our showiest butterflies (the soap opera of who eats whom & how the eaten fight back), and then go outside to see what you can see for yourself. **Margaret Chatham** works with the Virginia Native Plant Society, Potomac Gorge Weed Warriors, The Nature Conservancy, and Arlington Regional Master Naturalists. She's still learning, and hopes you'll join her in the great exploration of nature. For more information: 703-228-6535. Meet at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Rd, Arlington, VA 22204. **Free Register at <https://registration.arlingtonva.us>. Program #: 642951-G**

Sat. August 6 Bees in the Backyard (8:30 am-Noon) Leader Nate Erwin Discover the diversity of native bees and other pollinators right outside your doorstep and in your garden. Join our leader in his home garden in Alexandria, VA and in surrounding natural areas for a look at what's helping produce many of the seeds and fruits in your neighborhood. Nate Erwin is the Director of the Insect Zoo at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. **Members \$21; nonmembers \$28** Registration required. For information or to register call: 301-652-9188 x16 or visit: <http://www.audubonnaturalist.org/> for registration form.

Thurs. Aug. 18 Introduction to the Identification of Grasses (7:30-9:30 pm) Saturday, August 20 (full-day field trip) Leader Cris Fleming Grasses, the dominant plants of meadows and other open areas, often present a challenge to plant identification enthusiasts. On Thursday evening, we will discuss the structure and terminology of grass flowers, observe the characteristics of the subgroups of the grass family, and learn to identify some grass species. The field trip takes us to Great Falls, VA, where many native and introduced grasses can be studied. Park entrance fee is waived for class members. **Members \$40; nonmembers \$56**

Lecture only members \$18; nonmembers \$25 Registration required. For information or to register call: 301-652-9188 x16 or visit: <http://www.audubonnaturalist.org/> for registration form.

Thurs. Aug. 18 Introduction to Dragonfly and Damselfly Studies (7:30-9:30 pm) Sun. Aug. 21 (full-day field trip) Leader Richard Orr Grab your binoculars and prepare to set your sights not on birds - although "mosquito hawk" is a common moniker - but on those six-legged, aerial acrobats of wetland habitats: the dragonflies and damselflies. On Thursday evening, local entomologist and dragonfly expert Richard Orr will use slides and videos to discuss identification, biology, and behavior of the more common species of Odonates in our area. Our field trip to the Patuxent Research Refuge near Bowie, MD, where our leader has conducted dragonfly studies, will give us a chance to test our identification skills. **Members \$40; Nonmembers \$56 Lecture only members \$18; nonmembers \$25** Registration required. For information or to register call: 301-652-9188 x16 or visit: <http://www.audubonnaturalist.org/> for registration form.

Sat. Aug. 20 Project Learning Tree 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM Adults. Registration required. Project Learning Tree (PLT) is an interdisciplinary, award winning environmental education program designed by educators for educators. PLT's mission is to increase understanding of our environment, and to stimulate critical and creative thinking as well as develop the ability to make informed decisions on environmental issues. PLT activities help students connect classroom concepts to the real world through a variety of hands-on activities. Participants will receive a copy of the PLT PreK-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide packed with 96 multi-disciplinary activities - each tailored to specific grade levels and learning objectives. All include up-to-date student resources, background information for educators, and easy-to-follow instructions. Please bring a bag lunch and drink. The facilitator is environmental educator and Fairfax Master Naturalist Elizabeth Burke. For information: 703-228-6535. Meet at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S Carlin Springs Rd, Arlington, VA 22204. **Free**

Register at <https://registration.arlingtonva.us>. Program #: 642941-C

Sun. Aug 21 Monarch Tagging and Waystation Gardening 1:30pm or 3:30pm pm Hidden Oaks Nature Center. Meet monarch caterpillars and butterflies up close and discover fun facts about their metamorphosis and their preparations for autumn travel to Mexico. Participate in tagging monarchs and learn how to attract these and other garden jewels to your backyard. **Children must be accompanied by a registered, paying adult.** To Register: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/hiddenoaks/public.htm>

Sat. Aug 27 Monarch Tagging and Waystation Gardening 1:30pm or 3:30pm Hidden Oaks Nature Center. Meet monarch caterpillars and butterflies up close and discover fun facts about their metamorphosis and their preparations for autumn travel to Mexico. Participate in tagging monarchs and learn how to attract these and other garden jewels to your backyard. **Children must be accompanied by a registered, paying adult.** To Register: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/hiddenoaks/public.htm>

Sun. Aug 28 Monarch Watch & Banding 2:30 PM - 3:30 PM Adults, ages 14 and up. Where do our monarchs come from? When do the first of these gorgeous butterflies arrive? Participate in project Monarch Watch (www.Monarchwatch.org) as we capture and band the Monarchs visiting our milkweed. This citizen science project helps scientists learn about monarch migration patterns and routes. For more information: 703-228-3403. Meet at Gulf Branch Nature Center, 3608 Military Rd, Arlington, VA 22207. **\$5 fee due upon registration.**

Register at <https://registration.arlingtonva.us>. Program #: 642841-C

MAIPC CONFERENCE: August 3-4, 2011

Mid-Atlantic Invasive Plant Council will be holding its **8th Invasive Plant Conference: Tools and Techniques for Mapping, Managing and Mending Invaded Lands** at the **National Conservation Training Center** in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. *(This is a great U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service facility!)*

Invaded landscapes can be daunting to the point of complete hopelessness. It can be nearly impossible to imagine that a degraded forest, wetland, or grassland dominated by invasive plants could ever be returned to a natural habitat. However, because most of us have an irrepressible sense of optimism and are stimulated by a challenge, a tiny germ of hope soon becomes our mission to take action and we are off and running! That’s when the full weight of the problem hits us – restoring a highly invaded landscape is a huge, complex and long-term undertaking that can be very costly.

If you find yourself in this position, what can you do? This eighth Mid-Atlantic conference will provide you with the tools you need to accomplish your objectives. You will learn how to map the invasive species on your site, develop a site plan, select appropriate control methods, and ultimately, achieve restoration to a site dominated by suitable native plant species.

The complete brochure is at: <http://www.business-services.upenn.edu/arboretum/pdf/Conference%20Brochure-2011.pdf>
 Details and registration are available at: <http://www.business-services.upenn.edu/arboretum/invasivePlantConference.shtml>

Chapter Events Calendar



**Jul 14 Board Meeting 7:00pm
Green Spring**

**Potowmack Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
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