

EARLY FALL

# POTOWMACK NEWS

*Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society*

VOLUME 36, No. 4, SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 2018

## My Time as a Huntley Meadows Park Native Plant Intern

By Kayla Morrison



KAYLA MORRISON COUNTING PURPLE MILKWEED (*ASCLEPIAS PURPURASCENS*) AT HUNTLEY MEADOWS. PHOTO BY RYAN WALSH.

My name is Kayla Morrison. I'm a rising junior at the University of Vermont, where I'm pursuing a degree in environmental science with a minor in plant biology. This summer I had the amazing opportunity to work with Dave Lawlor, the natural resource manager of Huntley Meadows Park, as the Virginia Native Plant intern. I'm not new to the park service - I had the opportunity to work for Brenda Skarphol at Green Spring Gardens last summer as the Virginia Native Plant intern and I had such a great time, I knew I had to come back. I grew up in the Falls Church area and visited many of these parks numerous times as a kid, which initially sparked my interest in environmental science. It's an absolute pleasure to return and hopefully help contribute to the conservation of these areas for future generations to enjoy.

My main job this summer was to track Purple Milkweed (*Asclepias purpurascens*) throughout the park. Surveys had been done in years prior, but my job was to check on the populations we had on record and hopefully find new ones in the northern region of the park. This data will be used to support the park's desire for a Natural Reserve Area status, as *A. purpurascens* has an S2 (imperiled) state ranking in Virginia; interestingly, Huntley Meadows has some of the

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## Upcoming

### Dr. Desiree Narango:

#### How Native Plants Support Wildlife

Wednesday, Sept 12, 7:30-9 pm  
Huntley Meadows Visitor Center

Desiree Narango studied with Doug Tallamy and Peter Marra. Here she presents results of her research on how well various trees and shrubs support insectivorous Carolina chickadees and other songbirds. Co-sponsored by Friends of Dyke Marsh.

### Statewide VNPS Annual Meeting & Conference

Sept 14-16, Williamsburg & vicinity

See the complete schedule of walks and talks at [vnps.org](http://vnps.org).

### Megan Whatton:

#### Habitat Network

Thursday, Oct 11, 7:30-9 pm  
Green Spring Gardens Horticulture Center

Habitat Network Project Manager for the Nature Conservancy introduces this free online platform to explore how our collective efforts to transform yards and urban landscapes into more diverse habitat can support wildlife and connect people to nature.

### Potowmack Chapter Annual Meeting

Sunday, Nov 4, 12:30-3:30 pm  
Green Spring Gardens Horticulture Center  
(or at least that's the time it was last year)

All events are free and open to the public. Walks require preregistration.

Join our listserve at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/vnps-pot> to receive notices with walk registration links.

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4. Once logged in, you can manage your account and preferences by clicking on "What would you like to do?" in the upper right-hand corner.

## Some Fall Native Plant Sales

Weds, Sept 5 & Oct 3, 10 am-1 pm, **VNPS** 1st Wednesday sales in the propagation beds behind the Horticulture Center at Green Spring Gardens Park

Sat, Sept 8, 9 am-3 pm **Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy** Native Plant Sale at Morven Park, Leesburg (enter from Old Waterford Road). Three Virginia-based vendors.

Sat, Sept 22, 9am-3pm **Green Spring Gardens** Fall Garden Day, Many vendors, including sales by VNPS.

Sat, Sept 22, 1-3 pm **Long Branch** Native Plant Sale at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin St., Arlington. Rain date Sun, Sept 23, 1-3. You may pre-order plants at [registration.arlingtonva.us](http://registration.arlingtonva.us).

Sun, Sept 23, 10 am-2 pm **Earth Sangha** Native Plant Sale, at the nursery, north end of Cloud Drive, Franconia (date tentative: double check closer to the time)

Sat, Sept 29, 9 am-2 pm **Northern Alexandria** Native Plant Sale at Church of St. Clement, 1701 N Quaker Lane, Alexandria. Many vendors from 3 states.

## WHERE YOU CAN WHACK SOME INVASIVE EXOTIC PLANTS

### Falls Church Habitat Restoration Team

Help restore the local ecosystem in city parks. Remove invasives and plant natives that will benefit local birds and butterflies. For more information contact Melissa Teates at 703-538-6961 or [melanite@verizon.net](mailto:melanite@verizon.net)

### Arlington County's Remove Invasive Plants (RiP) Program

Help Rescue Arlington parks from alien plant invaders! Please bring your own tools. For more information, contact Sarah Archer at 703-228-1862 or [sarcher@arlingtonva.us](mailto:sarcher@arlingtonva.us)

### Reston Association's Habitat Heroes Program

Help restore local wildlife habitat through invasive plant removal and replanting with native plants For more information, contact Ha Brock at 703-435-7986 or [ha@reston.org](mailto:ha@reston.org)

### Fairfax County's Invasive Management Area (IMA) Program

Help remove invasive plants and learn about new invasive species. For more information, contact Erin Stocksclaeder at 703-324-8681 or [erin.stocksclaeder@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:erin.stocksclaeder@fairfaxcounty.gov)

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largest populations of *A. purpurascens* in the state. Additionally, I worked with Karla Jamir and the Virginia Native Plant Society to find sedges and grasses in the park. I began to learn the complex world of the *Carex* genus. I practiced identifying some species and updated dichotomous keys. While maybe not as glamorous as field work, but just as important, I also helped update the Huntley Meadows plant database.



GREAT SPANGLED FRITILLARY ON PURPLE MILKWEED. PHOTO BY LINDSAY SCHNEIDER

While natives are wonderful, when you study natives, many times you also have to study invasive exotic plants. One of the most important things I learned this summer was invasive plant removal either through manual or chemical means. I grew up never liking herbicide, but I've realized this summer that herbicide is necessary if invasive plants are well established in an area and they've started encroaching on other land. I learned protocols for mixing and spraying herbicide to kill invasives such as Japanese Stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*), Wineberry (*Rubus phoenicolasius*), Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), Porcelain-berry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*), and Mile-a-minute (*Persicaria perfoliata*). In addition to controlling invasives, I was also tasked, with the help of Lindsay Schneider and Ryan Walsh, with putting up recruitment fencing around the trails in the park. This was done to help protect the understory from the pesky

deer that eat many of the saplings trying to establish themselves in the forest.

While working with natives was my main responsibility this summer, I also helped Lindsay Schneider (the water quality intern) and Ryan Walsh (natural resource management assistant) with their duties. I was able to help Lindsay with water quality sampling in four different pools around the park, and even to start learning to identify different macroinvertebrates. I also helped with general maintenance work around the trails with Brian Moore and Steve Lindbloom, in addition to identifying birds, doing butterfly walks, and monitoring vernal pools and bird boxes.

I've had some amazing experiences this summer, but the most important was seeing and working with a holistic approach to conservation. Conservation cannot be achieved by focusing only on the plants, but plants and everything in between. It wasn't until this year that I began to see the complexities of conservation and the cooperation between many different disciplines. I can't thank Dave Lawlor enough for helping me see this and giving me the opportunity to be able to work in many different areas of conservation. I'd also like to thank the Friends of Huntley Meadows and the Virginia Native Plant Society for giving me this opportunity and supporting me through this adventure. I can't wait to see where this field of study takes me, and I can't wait to use the lessons I learned through this internship during my studies and career.

## My Native Plant Internship at Green Spring Gardens By Maggie Hirschberg

This summer, my native plant internship at Green Spring Gardens gave me a comprehensive introduction to the world of native plants and gardening. I thank the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society not only for their financial generosity in providing for my internship, but also for their friendliness and the welcoming atmosphere every Wednesday when I helped with propagation and maintenance of their holding beds. I enjoyed working with the propagation team so much that I brought my mom to help one Wednesday as well! It has been an incredible experience to work with a group of people

with such a wealth of plant and environmental knowledge. I would also like to thank the Friends of Green Spring for making such an incredible garden possible, and my mentor, Brenda Skarphol for working with me and teaching me about native and non-native plants and gardening. This internship has been an incredible and enjoyable learning experience.

My internship involved a diversity of activities. Much of what I did involved invasive species control in the Virginia Native Plant Garden and in natural areas. Green Spring, like much of Virginia, has problems with insidious, non-native vines like Porcelain-berry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*), Five-leaf Akebia (*Akebia quinata*), Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), Winter Creeper (*Euonymus fortunei*), Chinese Wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), and English Ivy (*Hedera helix*). I learned how much work goes into keeping up with natural processes and maintaining a variety of plants - a lot! - from areas of meadows to woods to typical gardens.

Some natives thrive in well-watered gardens! On one of my first days as an intern, I spent several hours removing a large patch of native Eastern Blue-star (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*) from the sunny border by the stone path at the top of the native plant garden where it had reseeded too freely. It was rewarding to be able to plant new things in the newly cleared area and elsewhere in the gardens. It was exciting to discover so many



**This is me with a cart full of the *Amsonia tabernaemontana* (and a few other things) removed from the top of the Virginia Native Plant Garden. Photo by Ashley Keller.**

beautiful native plants throughout my time at Green Spring! I helped label plants with metal photo labels as well, which was useful in learning plant names.

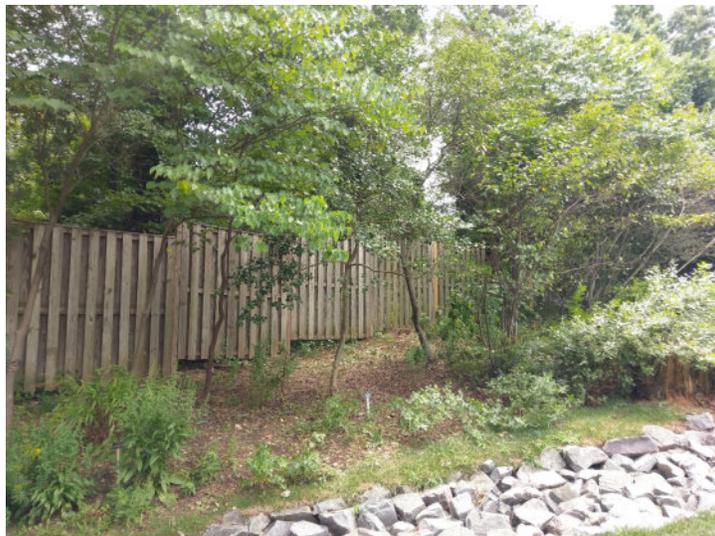


**Looking into the replanted area of the top of the Virginia Native Plant Garden almost two months after the *Amsonia tabernaemontana* was removed. Photo by Maggie Hirschberg.**

My team worked frequently to refine the native plant garden, as well as the Right Bioretention Area/ Rain Garden in the Entrance Garden below the shop sign (which has become the home of many of the native plants removed from the bridge project in the native plant garden). One recent area of focus was the native border by the Townhouse Gardens, where my team and I, along with several volunteers, limbed up Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) and Canadian Serviceberry trees (*Amelanchier canadensis*), removed woody plant saplings and Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) suckers, and cut back Chinese Wisteria and English Ivy coming from the neighboring property.

When many people think of a garden, they think of a manicured area with a variety of plants. I was inclined to agree with them before I learned about naturalistic design and before I began my internship. Many garden areas I worked in followed naturalistic design principles. One day during the long hot, dry spell in July, I was weeding in the native plant garden with a group of volunteers while a sprinkler was on nearby. A visitor from the public passed by and lightheartedly said he thought it was silly to water the woods. I informed him that while much of the native plant garden appears to be woods, it is truly a naturalistic garden in the woods. I was surprised myself at the beginning of my internship that the

wooded area of the garden requires frequent maintenance.



**The native border by the Townhouse Gardens after we finished clearing out the area. Photo by Maggie Hirschberg.**

In the last few weeks of my internship, I was introduced to the magnolia bog, or more accurately described as a seepage swamp due to shading by large trees and lack of fires. The magnolia bog is located along Turkeycock Run next to Green Spring's ponds, and has a boardwalk next to it. The defining tree in a magnolia bog is the Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*). This natural area and the native plant garden were my two favorite areas to work, and it was a fulfilling change of pace to work in a natural area. Our team removed saplings of large trees like oaks (*Quercus spp.*), Tuliptrees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), and American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) to bring more sunlight to the magnolias there. I have enjoyed being part of the effort to help restore an ecosystem that is now rare because of development.

It was interesting to work in weather that has become more unpredictable due to global warming. The weather during my internship largely consisted of either incredibly wet periods and very hot and dry spells. My team and I spent much of the dry period running around with sprinklers and watering cans to keep plants healthy.

I was able to explore the world of plants outside of Green Spring as well. I attended an intern field trip to tour the Smithsonian gardens and the U.S. Capitol grounds. I was able to meet other interns from the area with similar horticultural internships, as well as explore a different side of the Nation's Capital. I attended the Virginia Native Plant Society workshop on

grass ID with the Grass Bunch, where I met my internship predecessor, Kayla Morrison! I came away with a greater appreciation for a group of plants that are crucial for wetland and natural area restoration. I also attended an insect presentation by Green Spring's former intern Karim during a children's camp session at Green Spring - a lively morning! The final day of my internship will be spent on a field trip to Mt. Cuba, Winterthur, and Chanticleer, and I am excited to see their native plant gardens and naturalistic areas.

When I first began this internship, I had a burgeoning love for plants, but knew little of the diversity of native plants and had only basic experience with gardening. I came away with much deeper knowledge of gardening, as well as a new appreciation of the importance of native plants and related public education. I am a native of Arlington, Virginia, and attend the University of Vermont as an undergraduate, so it was interesting to compare the native flora in both states, although the importance of native plants to their ecosystems is universal. I will take with me the knowledge and experience I gained from my internship at Green Spring to my Environmental Studies and German majors and beyond.

### **Tell the World How Your Yard is Special!**

There are organizations that offer signs you can post in your yard to draw attention to its ecological value as you bring in native plants and other wildlife-friendly features. I hope we've all heard about the Audubon at Home program (<http://audubonva.org/audubon-at-home-1/>), but they're not the only ones from whom you can get an official sign to post. Here are some others, courtesy of a post from Wild Ones. Wild Ones offers its own signs, but at this writing is having problems with its website.

- (1) Monarch Waystation: <http://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations/certify.html>
- (2) Certified Butterfly Garden: [http://www.nababutterfly.com/cert\\_index.html](http://www.nababutterfly.com/cert_index.html)
- (3) Certified Wildlife Habitat: <http://www.nwf.org/Garden-For-Wildlife/Certify.aspx>
- (4) Xerces Society: "Pollinator Habitat Sign": <https://xerces.org/pollinatorhabitatsign/>
- (5) Pesticide Free Zone Yard Signs: [www.beyondpesticides.org/programs/lawns-and-landscapes/overview/be-a-model-for-your-community](http://www.beyondpesticides.org/programs/lawns-and-landscapes/overview/be-a-model-for-your-community)
- (6) Do Not Spray (or Mow) signs: <https://tallgrassprairiecenter.org/signs>

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## Word of the Month: Spathe



**Spathe:** large bract or pair of bracts subtending or enclosing the inflorescence in monocots. Our largest spathes include the showy spathes of Skunk Cabbage, *Symplocarpus foetidus*, and Common Jack-in-the-Pulpit, *Arisaema triphyllum*, but there are many smaller spathes to be found.

Shown here, spathes of Virginia Dayflower, *Commelina virginica*.

Photo by Margaret Chatham

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