

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 26, No.6

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

November/December 2008



Laura Beaty,
and Sally Anderson with Marty Nielsen
closely examining the flora in front.

NATIVE OAK AND HICKORY ID, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 7:30 PM

Join VNPS members for a hands-on plant identification workshop, led by noted plant ecologist, Rod Simmons. The Northern Virginia region contains a great diversity of native oaks, including numerous natural hybrids. We'll briefly discuss the identification of our native oaks and hybrids through the use of live material. The presentation will include their habitats and distribution. We hope to have acorns available from local, native trees for folks to plant. We'll also discuss identification techniques for distinguishing our region's four native hickory species as well.

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

Shirley Gay, Rod Simmons,

TREE IDENTIFICATION FIELD TRIP, SATURDAY, NOV. 22

As a follow-up to our November program, Rod Simmons will lead a field trip in Glen Carlyn Park on Saturday, November 22, 10:00AM - 2:00PM. We'll be learning to identify oaks, hickories and other trees by their bark, buds, and other attributes. If possible, please carpool or ride your bicycle as parking is limited. Bring lunch or a snack. Meet at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road, Arlington.

By bicycle, take the W&OD Trail and cross Four Mile Run just west of Sparrow Pond; then bike up the path to the nature center. By car, take Route 50 and exit at Carlin Springs Road. Go south past 6th Rd. until you see the sign for the Nature Center on the left and take the long driveway into the park.



"In our whole existence as a species, we have had the luxury of assuming that the earth's plant and animal bounty was inexhaustible, but since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, there has been a growing global consensus that the earth's changing climate, our patterns of resource consumption, and our soaring population are combining to threaten the very web of biodiversity that sustains all species, including, and especially, our own, and therefore we need to redefine our relationship with the natural world."

From **HOT, FLAT, AND CROWDED—Why We Need a Green Revolution and How it can Renew American** by Thomas L. Friedman

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Conservation has been an important part of the mission of the Virginia Native Plant Society for some time. Now, more than ever, the critical nature of this effort is becoming evident. Many scientists have been speaking quietly and firmly about the risk to the biome from unchecked development. Maybe it is now time for us to listen, understand, and act.

For many of us, living in the heavily developed suburban sprawl, the opportunity to experience the wonder of wildness requires a visit to a county or state park, often with the aid of our car. This refreshing and enjoyable activity is often curtailed by the need to cut our grass and prune the hedges. How much better would it be, for ourselves and our community, if the wildness were returned to our own neighborhood?

This is not just a plea to reducing lawn area and removing invasive species such as English Ivy. It is much more than that. We each need to see our neighborhood as part of a greater whole and we each need to decide how we can improve it for the commonweal. Planting native species provides more food for the insects and herbivores and provides more nesting habitat for the birds we cherish, the wrens and chickadees, and cardinals who must choose each year to nest in smaller and more exposed areas. We need to see our community as critical habitat for the survival of species.

And now the real challenge, because I know many of you have already arrived at this conclusion. I am asking that you reach out to your neighbors and friends and attend the community association meetings and press the agenda. Find out what the community association currently expects with regard to lawns and yard care, then speak up, exert some influence to bring about change. Use the common areas for a meadow and plant native shrubs on the property edge. Reach out to your church or swim club or local school and see what we can do to involve them in this effort. Each acre matters, every green space is needed.

The chapter is glad to serve as your advocate should you desire. Invite us to the next meeting of your association and we will gladly support your position and answer any questions that may arise. We can work together to expand the beneficial habitat in our communities and now is the time for us to act.

Alan Ford



Potowmack Chapter President, Alan Ford
(Photo courtesy of VNPS member, Roberta Day)

THE DESTRUCTIVE PRACTICE OF MOUNTAIN TOP REMOVAL AND VALLEY FILLS

By Pamela Bailey, Research Botanist and Landscape Architect

People, including the botanist community, should be aware of the destruction by the practice of mountain top removal (MTR) and valley fills. This practice which occurs in WV, eastern KY, TN, and a part of western VA, not only destroys mountains and streams, it also destroys square miles of the richest deciduous forest ecosystem anywhere on this planet. There is no such thing as "clean coal technology." You only have to drive as far as Appalachia to see that. Or you can look at Landsat data and remote sensing imagery to view the vast and total destruction on a large scale, which this type of mining has on the planet.

Restoration of these surface MTR coal mines does not work due to a number of factors. A basic engineering concept for material placement called "the angle of repose," limits any rebuilding of a sloped surface from *(Continued on page 4)*

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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 or e-mail her at malawler@aol.com.</p>		

WHY INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL IS WORTHWHILE By Steve Young



I've thought many times about the possible futility of invasive plant management work, usually while I'm out there doing it, often with questioning feelings of "What am I doing out here and why am I doing this?!?" I make no claims as to the eloquence, but these are some of my reflections on why invasive plant removal is worthwhile.

For over 10 years I have been working on invasive plant control at Long Branch Nature Center in Arlington, Virginia. Arlington likes to call itself an "urban village," and indeed it is fairly densely developed, so that its two nature centers are small islands of "nature" in the midst of a lot of urban/suburban development. I started my work when I noticed that English ivy seemed to be taking over most of the area around the Long Branch nature center building. It just didn't seem right. I had been grumbling

that "somebody ought to do something about that" and thinking that it was the County's job to work on the problem, but while I grumbled, the ivy just kept on growing. One day it occurred to me that maybe I was a somebody who should be doing something about it. Fairly randomly, and without a clue about what I was doing, I pulled up an ivy vine. It felt kind of satisfying. I pulled more. I cleared it off a park bench. I could see "progress." Without a plan, without knowing what I was doing, I continued to work. I did some dumb things. I made some mistakes. I started to learn. I discovered other people and organizations that were working on invasive plants. I signed up as an official volunteer. I began to form a sort of plan. I decided that it just seemed right that the area near the building should be as free of English ivy as possible, and that there should be no ivy growing up trees and harming them. I cleared hundreds of square feet of ground.

Over time, I learned the other invasives and began to kill them as I killed the English ivy. I satisfied myself, based on direct observation, that it was indeed possible to clear all the English ivy out of an area, even when it was extremely dense at the start, and to KEEP that area clear. I found that the native plants could regenerate in the cleared areas on their own, and observed them doing it. I began to feel like I was "liberating" ground so it could be what it should be. I liked it that visitors to the nature center now could see native plants, and mostly nothing but native plants, all around the building. Now I have a rough plan, and I keep pushing the bad stuff further back from the building and the main paths and access road. I found ways to try to do no harm to the native plants that were present among the invasives.

Working on invasives gives me a good excuse to be working outdoors. I can look at acres of land now and see real progress. I have learned a lot. I have seen, heard, and even smelled a lot of cool things while working out there. I have met a lot of nice people. I have had some adventures. Sometimes, I have been in environments that are darn close to "jungle" because of invasive growth. I have faced challenges and even a little danger. Yes, I have been poked in the eye by a stick and stung by yellowjackets. I've had mosquito bites and poison ivy rashes. I am very aware that even while I am working in one area and making progress, the invasive plants are growing and spreading somewhere else. Yes, I accept that I alone can't do it all.

The old environmental saying is "Think globally, act locally." And Tip O'Neill said "All politics is local." I may not be able to change things globally. I may not even be able to change things all over Arlington County. But I know I can change things at my local nature center, and I have, and I am determined to keep at it. And I am counting on it that I have a lot of company at other places working locally at their spots.

Finally, sometimes when I am out there, I try to think about how I would feel if I were part of the local native wildlife, like a songbird, an eastern box turtle, or even an insect. If a spot is infested with non-native invasive plants, I wouldn't be too happy. I would have trouble finding food. The place wouldn't feel right. As a turtle trying to get along, I would be running into strange obstacles that shouldn't be there. I think about how, if that area is cleaned up, I would be happier. It would feel right. So I keep at it and try to count on it that I am doing the right thing. I look for signs that the wildlife is responding, and I think I see some. So I keep going.

So, the bottom line is, you can make a difference in a spot and you can see that difference. Lots of other things won't give you that satisfaction. Go for it.

Steve Young, Volunteer, Arlington County "Remove Invasive Plants" (RIP), Treasurer, Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plants Council (MA-EPPC), and member VNPS.

FALL INVASIVES CONTROL by Chris Bowlen

(from the Shenandoah Chapter October 2008 newsletter—reprinted with permission).

Fall can be a very good time to work on invasive alien plants in your area to minimize the impact and spread of some species, especially Tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*). Tree of heaven will produce hundreds of small sucker trees and can create a larger problem than you started with if you simply cut the tree and do not treat it with herbicide **immediately**. Full strength Roundup applied to the stump usually (but not always) is effective. Garlon is the recommended herbicide but it is expensive. For larger trees, girdling can be effective as long as you are careful to scrape the circumference down to the xylem layers. If possible return to the area in the spring to pull up young seedling starts and check for regrowth from the stumps.

An excellent time to control Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) is after the native plants have died back from frost kill. Japanese honeysuckle remains green and viable into December and occasionally January. Cutting the long runners first and applying herbicide (again Roundup is effective for this) to the base provides good control and reduces the amount of herbicide required.

Multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) can also be removed at this time of year. Cutting the canes and digging out the roots works well for smaller clumps. For larger areas, herbicide is more effective since new plants are established where canes touch the ground. Multiflora rose will quickly re-establish itself from these small starts. With vigilance from repeated visits to an area, these starts are easily controlled by hand. However, if repeated visits are not practical, a systemic herbicide, such as Roundup, is beneficial.

The thousands of small garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) seedlings that sprout this time of year will be killed by the frost. Garlic mustard is a biennial and only the well established florets will produce seeds next spring. By timing your invasive plant control, you can reduce your labor and herbicide use. For more information, consult the web sites listed below.

--www.tncweeds.ucdavis.edu The Nature Conservancy Wildland Invasive Species Program. Excellent resource for identifying and controlling invasive plant species.

--www.nps.gov/plants/alien/pubs/midatlantic/ - National Park Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service info on invasive plant id and control.

-- http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/invspinfo.shtml Virginia's Natural Heritage Invasive Species Program

**ARLINGTON'S RiP PROJECT**

Sat., Nov. 8 Barcroft Park 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM Join volunteers of the RiP program and Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment (ACE) to cleanup Barcroft Park by picking up trash and removing invasive plants. Pre-registration is not required but suggested. To volunteer for this event, contact volunteer@arlingtonenvironment.org or 703-228-6406.

Sun. Dec. 7 Lacey Woods Park 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM Join volunteers of the RiP program and Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment (ACE) to cleanup Lacey Woods Park by picking up trash and removing invasive plants. Pre-registration is not required but suggested. To volunteer for this event, contact volunteer@arlingtonenvironment.org or 703-228-6406.

FAIRFAX COUNTY'S INVASIVE MANAGEMENT AREA (IMA) PROGRAM

The IMA (Invasive Management Area) 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!

Sun. Nov. 02, 10:00 - 12:30 pm **Marie Butler Leven Preserve** in McLean, email: amford@acm.org

Sat. Nov. 15, 9:30 - 12:00 pm, **Huntley Meadows** workday

Sun. Nov. 16, 10:00 - 12:30 pm **Marie Butler Leven Preserve** in McLean, email: amford@acm.org

Sat. Nov. 22, 10:00 - 12:00 pm, **Pohick Stream Valley** workday

Sat. Nov. 22, 9:00 - 11:00 am, **Laurel Hill** workday

Sun. Nov. 30, 10:00 - 12:30 pm **Marie Butler Leven Preserve** in McLean, email: amford@acm.org

Sat. Dec 13, 9:00 - 11:00 am, **Laurel Hill** workday

Sun. Dec. 14, 10:00 - 12:30 pm **Marie Butler Leven Preserve** in McLean, email: amford@acm.org

For more information: Katherine.Frederick@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.

THE DESTRUCTIVE PRACTICE OF MOUNTAIN TOP REMOVAL AND VALLEY FILLS

(Continued from page 2)

earth materials. The mountains can never be replaced. Different aspects and slopes add to the complexity and diversity of these deciduous forestlands. In addition, the chemistry and structure of the soils are so altered, they can not support the

regrowth of these diverse deciduous forests. The overburden and refuse goes into a valley fill, which destroys miles of headwater streams. This practice degrades the water system, from the upper watershed, all the way downstream.

Of course there are human consequences too. Many Appalachian communities suffer from devastating floods caused by sediment impoundments breaching, dumping toxic waters downstream into communities and streams. Many communities have been destroyed by these events. Increased flooding downstream is caused by increased runoff from these large tracts of valley fill upstream.

(One only has to understand another basic engineering concept to understand this phenomenon; the Rational formula. This formula is often used in the calculation of overland flow and water run-off, because of its simplicity and accuracy. It is quite accurate for small watersheds (<100 acres) and reasonably accurate for watersheds up to 2 square miles (Carpenter 1976). The run-off volumes are computed directly by establishing relationships between rainfall intensities, run-off ratios, watershed acreage and sometimes slope (Seelye 1954). The rational formula (Seelye 1954) can be expressed as: $Q = ciA$. Where Q represents the run-off in cubic feet per second; c represents the rainfall/run-off coefficient which is a roughness factor of the ground surface affecting the rate of run-off; i represents Storm intensity which is the intensity of rainfall in inches per hour for a period equal to the time of concentration (storm event); and A represents the area of watershed drainage, measured in acres. The coefficient of run-off expresses how the texture of the surface material affects the mean velocity of water flow traveling across the surface of the ground. The rougher a surface texture is, the slower water will move across the surface. Roughness coefficients are determined for different materials. The value assigned for each type material indicates the relative protection the material provides from flowing water. Larger values provide greater protection from flowing water.)

Energy policy and politics drive this critical energy issue. However, it comes down to our choice as individual energy consumers; do we continue to buy cheap energy from these destructive practices, or do we support alternative energy sources? What price are we willing to pay for coal powered energy? How much are the Appalachian mountains and the richest deciduous forest ecosystem worldwide worth?

Citations:

Carpenter, J.D. 1976. Handbook of Landscape Architectural Construction. The Landscape Architecture Foundation, Inc. Washington D.C. 772p.

Seelye, E.E. 1954. Data Book for Civil Engineers: Field Practice. John Wiley and Sons, Inc. NY 394 p.

LOCAL EVENTS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:

Sun., Nov. 2, Films in the Forest: Eco-Tech, 7-9PM. Adults and teens ages 15 and above. Are you interested in the technology behind the green movement? If so, take a seat under the trees in the lovely Long Branch Amphitheater to watch two episodes of the Science Channel's series, Eco-Tech. These programs feature the latest in green technologies developed to help address global resource issues. Feel free to bring your own snacks. Free. Registration required; register on-line <https://registration.arlingtonva.us/vsiwebtrac.html> or call 703-228-4747. Refer to Program # 612534C. Meet at LBNC. For more information: 703-228-6535.

Sun. Nov. 9, Shenandoah Fall Hike 8AM-5PM. Adults. Explore Shenandoah National Park as its spectacular fall foliage is on display. Along with some breathtaking views there may be an opportunity to spot two native residents: the white-tailed deer and the black bear. The hiking trails will be strenuous. Dress in layers. Bring a bag lunch \$20 fee. Registration required. Our van leaves from Lubber Run Recreation Center parking lot, 300 N Park Dr., Arlington, VA 22203. . Registration required, register on-line <https://registration.arlingtonva.us/vsiwebtrac.html> or call 703-228-4747. Refer to Program # 612504I. . For more information: 703-228-6535.

Wed. Nov. 5 Trees on the Town: Leesburg's Urban Forest 7:30-8:45pm Presented by: **Jay Bank, President of Virginia's Urban Forest Council.** Rust Nature Sanctuary. 802 Children's Center Rd. SW, Leesburg, VA 20175. **Free, but registration required.** For information or to register call: 703-737-0021.

Sat., Nov.15 Fall in the Forest Walk, 9:30am –noon. Rust Nature Sanctuary. 802 Children's Center Rd. SW, Leesburg, VA 20175. **\$5** payable at the beginning of the walk. Will focus on ecology behind our observations. Adults and children over 10.

Sun., Nov. 16, Edible Movie, 2-4:30PM. Adults. Calling all omnivores! Calling all locavores! Calling anyone who enjoys fresh delicious food that is raised with a positive relationship to Virginia's natural environment. Michael Pollan, author of the best-selling "Omnivore's Dilemma," calls Polyface Farm in Staunton, Virginia "one of the most productive and influential alternative farms in America." Join us for a movie that documents a year in the life of this dynamic "farm of many faces," and learn about our plans for local farm visits in 2009. Organic popcorn will be served. \$5 fee. Registration required. Register by calling 703-228-4747 or online at

https://registration.arlingtonva.us/vsiwebtrac.html. Refer to Program # 612404E Meet at Gulf Branch Nature Center (3608 Military Rd., Arlington, VA 22207). For information, call 703-228-3403.

FALLS CHURCH INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL TASK FORCE Upcoming 2008 Events:

Sat. Nov. 15. Habitation Restoration-Hamlett/Rees Tract Park 10am-Noon

For information regarding habitat restoration projects, contact Jeremy Edwards, City of Falls Church, Senior Urban Forester, 703-248-5016 or jedwards@fallschurchva.gov.

INVASIVES CONTROL WORK PARTIES AT TURKEY RUN PARK ALONG THE POTOMAC

Join with The Nature Conservancy to help control invasive plant species on National Park Service lands in the Potomac Gorge at Turkey Run Park off the GW Memorial Parkway. Wear work gloves and boots or sturdy shoes, and bring water, snacks, and hand saws or loppers if you have them. The schedule for November and December is: **Thurs. Nov. 13 10-1, Sat. Nov. 15 10-1, and Thurs. Dec. 11 10-1.** Check on meeting location with Alan Ford: 703.732.5291; email: amford@acm.org



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

Chapter Events Calendar

- Nov 13 Board Meeting 6:45
Oak and Hickory
Identification program
7:30
Green Spring Gardens
- Nov 22 Chapter Walk
Glen Carlyn Park
10am to 2pm
- Dec 11 Board Meeting 7:30
Green Spring Gardens

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