

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 19, No 6

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Nov/Dec 2001

VIRGINIA NATURAL HERITAGE SITES NOVEMBER 8 PROGRAM

Join us on **November 8** at 7:30 at Green Spring Gardens Park for a program featuring **Chris Ludwig** from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to speak about Virginia's natural heritage program. Chris is the Chief Biologist, in the Division of Natural Heritage and the Executive Director of the Virginia Flora Project.

Chris will describe DCR's native plant conservation initiatives. These efforts include the development of the Virginia rare plant species list, inventory for rare plants, conservation of important rare plant sites, vegetation classification efforts, stewardship of conservation lands to restore and maintain rare plant habitat and significant natural communities, and interaction with agencies and organizations to protect native plants. Finally, Chris will feature the Flora of Virginia Project. It is designed to develop a modern flora for Virginia, which will describe the 3700+ plant taxa found in the Commonwealth.

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

CRIS FLEMING FEATURED AT CHAPTER ANNUAL MEETING AND WALK

Botanist **Cris Fleming** was the Chapter's featured speaker at the October 11 annual meeting. Cris is the Chapter's botany chair, a freelance botanist and educator. She has done substantial botanical survey work in our area for state and federal agencies. Her talk centered on the Potomac Gorge, which is the



Cris Fleming at Great Falls

land along the Potomac extending from Great Falls to Little Falls. It is a surprisingly diverse area with many unique niches and rare plants.

Geologic forces, seasonal flooding and erosion created many different habitats along the Potomac Gorge. And the river has brought with it species not commonly found here. The Virginia Natural Heritage Program cites this area as having "the highest concentration of rare species in the Northeast and possibly the entire eastern U.S." One significant habitat, the riverside outcrop barren, is listed as rare in the state.

The floral display begins along the floodplain in the spring with masses of Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), the diminutive harbinger-of-spring (*Erigenia bulbosa*) and the white trout-lily, a mid-western species. Climb along the bedrock terrace, the rocky bluffs above the river, to find baptisia (*Baptisia australis*), blazing star (*Liatris spicata*) and leatherflower (*Clematis viorna*). In October return to see the riverbank goldenrod (*Solidago racemosa*), which only grows in the Potomac Gorge. In August search the riverside wetlands for cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), halberd-leaved rose mallow (*Hibiscus laevis*) and swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*). Cris illustrated that one could never be bored with such a diverse area literally in our backyards. With many parks to choose from, and a long blooming season, the amateur botanist could be happy without straying far from home. For more specific information on the parks and plants, refer to Cris's book, Finding Wildflowers in the Washington-Baltimore Area. (See associated walk, page 3.)

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE:

The Chapter board would like to welcome our newest member, Vivian Dukes, who will be serving as treasurer. We bid fond farewells and send our heartfelt thanks to Bill Kreitz, our treasurer for four years, and Sally Sieracki, our newsletter editor for four years. In these over-committed times, we are most grateful to the board members and others who give their time and expertise to keep our chapter rolling.

In an effort to expand our reach, the Chapter has become involved in several partnerships with like-minded organizations. Our purpose is to further conservation of native plants and particularly to alert as many people as possible to the threat of invasive plants. This issue talks about some of these partnerships.

Lastly, I look forward to seeing all of you at our November program. The Virginia Natural Heritage agency has been a long-time partner and supporter of VNPS. Let's support its effort to publish a Virginia flora and enjoy an evening of the best of natural Virginia.

Marianne Mooney

PLANT SALE

The fall plant sale at Green Spring Gardens Park on September 22 was a great success. It was a perfect day with excellent vendors, including our chapter's two tables filled with desirable native plants, and lots of gardeners looking for a few special plants. We have many people to thank for the 1,450 plants we had to offer. The majority of the plants came from the chapter's propagation beds at Green Spring.

Many thanks to the volunteers, who maintain the beds and prepare the plants for the sales. Remember, you don't have to be an expert on native plants to volunteer. The learning begins when you become involved in working with the natives. We work Wednesday and Saturday mornings at Green Spring Gardens Park. Please consider volunteering some time to the chapter; you won't regret it. Call Laura (703-534-8746) or Beth (703-644-1760) for details.

Thanks also go to individuals for donating plants to the sale. They include Margaret Chatham, Mary Ann Lawler, Marianne Mooney, Sally Sieracki, Shirley Gay, Lori Markoff, Roberta Day, Beth Smith, Laura Beaty, Rod Simmons and Jeff Herndon. Jeff Herndon donated plants we have never offered before, *Rhododendron calendulaceum*, the Flame azalea and *Uvularia perfoliata*, Merrybells. The azaleas were 3' to 4' high with flower buds in place. They were so beautiful that we donated 3 of them to local gardens, Green Spring Gardens Park, Meadowlark Horticultural Park, and the Quarry Garden in Bon Air Park. All the donated plants were well received by the public.

Finally, we would like to thank all the volunteers that made the sale possible. The long list includes Vivian Attermeyer, Laura Beaty, Edith Bradbury, Tiana Camfiord, Margaret Chatham, Roberta Day, Dusty Dukes, Shirley Gay, Eleanor Kask, Chris King, Bill Kreitz, Paul Kovenock, Mary Ann Lawler, Marianne Mooney, Louis Nichols, Sally Sieracki, Beth Smith, Elaine Squeri, and Billie Trump. They either prepared the plants for sale, worked at the sale, or both. Special thanks to Elaine Squeri for running the chapter's seed program, and to Margaret Chatham for the extra hours she donated to ensure that all our plants were identified with new printed labels, our first ever. Thanks to all the buyers for the making the sale so successful. Happy planting.

Laura Beaty and Beth Smith

WALKING THE TALK by Shirley Gay

BOARD OFFICERS		
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Newsletter	Mary Ann Lawler	684-8622
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	Beth Smith	644-1760
Publications	Roberta Day	560-5528
Publicity	Sylvia Orli	528-5618
Site Registry	Rod Simmons	256-7671
Garden Tours	Billie Trump	960-1476

(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.

What a treat. **Cris Fleming's** walk was even more wonderful than the talk. Saturday, October 13 was a glorious morning at Great Falls Park. As promised Cris greeted an enthusiastic group at the Visitor Center. When we arrived, she was already talking about the nearby fringe trees (*Chionanthus virginicus*). Cris reminded us that we would see some of the habitats of her talk, but not all. Leaving the Visitor Center, walking downstream (east) through the terrace forest, we saw tulip trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), black walnuts (*Juglans nigra*), red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), willow oak (*Quercus phellos*), post oak (*Q. stellata*) and a red oak (*Q. sp.*).

From Overlook 3 on the bedrock terrace we could see riverside prairie over in Maryland. As we walked closer to the river, but still high on the cliffs of the bedrock terrace, we saw more herbs and shrubs. Although many of the



Solidago racemosa
Flora of West Virginia

flowering species were already in fruit, the beauty of several asters and goldenrods delighted us. The first aster Cris identified was the tiny calico aster (*Aster lateriflorus*). Other asters were heart leaved (*A. cordifolius*), late purple aster (*A. patens*), small white aster (*A. vimineus*), stiff aster (*A. linariifolius*), bushy aster (*A. dumosus*), and white wood aster (*A. divaricatus*). Some of the goldenrods were a bit further along than the asters, but we saw silverrod (*Solidago bicolor*), elm-leaved goldenrod (*S. ulmifolia*), blue-stem goldenrod (*S. caesia*), late goldenrod (*S. gigantea*), and the rare riverbank goldenrod (*S. racemosa*).

In cracks of rocks we saw Pennsylvania smartweed (*Polygonum pensylvanicum*).

As expected, the whorled milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*) was in seed. We were to see only the leaves of the state-rare western sunflower (*Helianthus occidentalis*). In fruit, we saw the bush clover (*Lespedeza capitata*). Using our sense of smell, we learned to appreciate why the naturalized Queen Anne's-lace (*Daucus carota*) is also known as wild carrot.

October is a great time to see grasses in seed. We saw bottle-brush grass (*hystrix patula*), wild oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*), the very lovely, little bluestem (*Schyzachyrium scoparius*), big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardi*), purpletop (*Tridens flava*), purple lovegrass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*), and switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*). Unfortunately, we also saw lots of Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*).

Ferns were not as numerous as in other places in the Potomac gorge, but we saw ebony spleenwort (*Asplenium platyneuron*), bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*) in its dry habitat, and rock pulpwood (*Polypodium virginianum*) and marginal wood fern (*Dryopteris marginalis*) nearer the forest.

A pot hole filled with water provided the special moist micro-climate needed by seedbox (*Ludwigia alternifolia*). Nearby we saw soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) and leaves of a wetland sedge (*Carex crinita*). Yet another plant usually found in wet areas, *Itea virginica* was fairly close. Earlier we saw nut sedge (*Cyperus strigosus*).

A very showy winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) graced our path not far from a fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*). Shortly before reaching Mather gorge, we had an October preview of spring. A rattlesnake weed (*Hieracium venosum*) was in flower. Sadly, Mather gorge was our last stop.

In a beautiful place on a splendid day, with Cris Fleming's fantastic leadership and inspiration, "walking the talk" was a grand experience. We just can't wait until spring to tiptoe through the ephemerals.

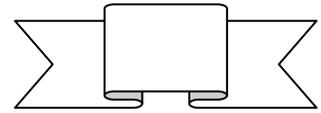
Eleanor Kask - for 200 hours of volunteer work in the propagation beds

Mary Ann Lawler - for 100 hours of volunteer work in the propagation beds

Margaret Chatham - for computerizing the plant labeling system

Bill Kreitz - for his outstanding work as treasurer from 1997 to 2001

Sally Sieracki - for her superb contribution as Editor of *Potowmack News* from 1997 to 2001



INVASIVE PLANTS: ACTION ON ALL FRONTS by Lisa Palmer

In mid-August, as the Potowmack Chapter's conservation co-chair, I attended a conference at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania on invasive plant issues. The conference, entitled *Invasive Plants: Action on All Fronts*, was sponsored by eight organizations, including the Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council. Participants included conservationists; federal, state, county, and municipal park personnel; land and natural resource managers; nursery and landscape professionals; volunteers, and environmental educators. Other VNPS members in attendance included Mary Pockman and Ruth Douglas.

The conference featured more than 25 presentations given in concurrent sessions over a period of two days. The main focus of the conference was the nature of the invasive plant problem and possible impacts recent research may have on management and public information programs. Topics of interest included: Understanding Impacts of Invasive Plants by John Randall of The Nature Conservancy; National Policy-- What is the Government Doing to Help by Chris Dionigi of the National Invasives Species Council; Biological Control of Invasive Plants in the Northeast by Bernd Blossey of Cornell University; Lists, Criteria, and Being Pro-active with Potentially Invasive Species by Leslie Mehrhoff of the University of Connecticut; The Weed Warriors of Montgomery County Parks, MD by Carole Bergmann of the Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission; and a panel discussion on Invasives and the Nursery Industry: Barriers and Options by John Peter Thompson of Behnke Nurseries Company, Lois Renthall of the Garden Club of America and Larry Sheehan of Waterloo Gardens.

We received several take-home messages. One was organizations need to specify what they want to accomplish when contending with invasive plants. Second, to fully understand the impact of invasive plants and pests, society needs highly trained people to recognize invasive species and to understand native floras. Therefore, society needs to support natural history graduate programs and education better than it currently does. Third, invasive eradication programs are long-term projects that require sustained labor and financial support to achieve success. The projects need to be carefully planned, with land managers keeping abreast of the latest scientific research. And last, but equally important, potential invasive species need to be regularly observed and monitored to determine if the species is moving from restricted habitats to widespread areas.

Overall, *Invasive Plants: Action on all Fronts* was an informative and stimulating conference of an eclectic group of people. VNPS Potowmack Chapter looks forward to the next one in two years.

INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL: TEAMING UP WITH ACE

Potowmack Chapter members have been active partners with Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment (ACE) in its Project Watershed Watch program. In July we had an exhibit at its kickoff picnic event and helped remove kudzu at Barcroft Park. In September we participated in Invasive Plant Removal Training for about a dozen people at Bailey's Branch Park, one of the tributaries of Four Mile Run near Columbia Pike. English ivy and porcelain berry abound there, as does the shrub form of Japanese honeysuckle. Trainees learned to identify the most troublesome exotics affecting parks and control and removal techniques. Work will continue at Bailey's Branch Park as well as at Fort Myer Heights Park in North Arlington. Watch the listserv for notices of upcoming opportunities to volunteer.

FAIRFAX COUNTY'S WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Potowmack Chapter was invited to participate in a stakeholders meeting as part of Fairfax County's watershed master planning process. Seventy percent of Fairfax County's streams are in fair to very poor condition. The long-term goal is to maintain the ecological integrity and health of stream corridors. The process will include data collection, analysis, modeling, developing options for projects

with public input, estimating costs, and setting priorities before an overall plan is completed. It will be implemented over a period of years by budgeting for capital improvements and other work. We urge all of you who live in Fairfax County to participate in the public planning process to ensure that native plants are a priority in stream restoration and protection.

VNPS PARTICIPATED IN ALEXANDRIA'S SEAPORT FESTIVAL by Cathy Greene

The Virginia Native Plant Society joined the fun at Alexandria's Seaport Day Festival held on October 13 at Founder's Park on the waterfront in Old Town. Our exhibit of display panels, books and native and invasive plant bouquets drew well over 100 people during the 10-5 festival. Our exhibit was located in a shaded corner of the park, between the raptor exhibit and other popular displays, and was staffed by **Sylvia Orli, Kathleen Kust, and Cathy Greene**.

The beautiful native plant bouquet--with Calico Aster, Swamp Sunflower, Turtlehead, Goldenrod, Little Bluestem and Heavy Metal Broomsedge from Kathleen's gardens--was the centerpiece of the exhibit! And it must have been inspirational because people asked for native plant recommendations for their gardens throughout the day. People also asked about native plant nurseries and were directed to the VNPS website.

Another way we could help people connect with and learn about native plants is to make it easier to find books about them. People were able to discover or confirm native plants—Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), for example--by looking at pictures in one of our books. A number of people wanted books like the ones we had out. A source list might be one way, posted on our site and on a hand out sheet. It is still too hard to locate these books, especially the more serious ones.

Kathleen had a number of children stop by in the afternoon. She said that children felt leaves to see how soft and fuzzy or shiny they were, and saw what color they are in the Fall. They learned that one of the leaves was Sassafras, whose roots are used to make root beer. They smelled the broken twig for a hint of the root beer smell. The festival and exhibit provided a great opportunity for native and invasive plant education and outreach to people of all ages.

CREATING WILDLIFE HABITAT IN ARLINGTON

Claudia Thompson Deale, a charter member of VNPS, was one of the featured speakers at a September 25 program on creating wildlife habitat in Arlington. Claudia has been instrumental in having Reston, Virginia, become the third community in the United States to become certified as wildlife habitat. About 40 interested citizens participated in the meeting at the Arlington Central Library to learn about creating a National Wildlife Federation Community Wildlife Habitat in Arlington. The project is sponsored by Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment (ACE) and the National Wildlife Federation and is designed to make Arlington more wildlife-friendly by creating landscapes that promote neighborhood beautification, safety, and natural resource conservation in backyards, schoolyards, workplaces and parks. David Mizejewski, manager of the National Wildlife Federation Backyard Habitat Program, spoke about how to create a wildlife habitat by providing food, water, shelter, and places to raise young.

The Potowmack Chapter of VNPS will be an active partner with ACE in this project. Our conservation co-chairs **Rob Aldrich** and **Lisa Palmer** are on the strategy committee. For more information, call them at 703-526-0535 or call ACE at 703-228-6427. ACE's e-mail address is office@arlingtonenvironment.org.

FOUR MILE RUN: REVIVING AN URBAN STREAM

The world premiere of the documentary film "Four Mile Run: Reviving an Urban Stream" was held on October 24, at the State Theater in Falls Church to an enthusiastic audience of over 400 people. The film provides the geology and history of the stream, documents its decline and problems, and provides hope for community efforts to improve its water quality and environmental value. Virginia Native Plant Society is one of the sponsors of the film, and Chapter President Marianne Mooney was featured in it,

speaking about the value of native plants and the problems of invasive exotic plant species. If you missed the premiere, you can view the film at the Arlington County Central Library on December 4, 2001, at 7:00 P.M. with a reception beginning at 6:30 P.M.

**Botanical Society of Washington
Centennial Anniversary Symposium
"A Capital View of Botany: Our Changing D.C. Flora"
December 8, 2001
U.S. National Arboretum 12:00-8:30pm**

Doug Ripley: "History of Washington DC Regional Botany and Botanists"
Stanwyn G. Shetler: "Vascular Plant Flora"
James Lawrey: "Lichens and Other Nonvascular Plants"
Larry Morse: "Habitat Conservation for Rare Native Plants"
Elizabeth Wells: "Exotic and Invasive Plants"
Paul Peterson: "Flowering Times and Regional Warming Trends"
Keynote Speaker: Leo Hickey: "Time's Green Arrow: The Evolution of Washington's Flora"
(See <http://www.fred.net/kathy/symp.html> for details, or call Jill Swearingen at 202-342-1443, ext. 218)

WANT TO JOIN THE CHAPTER LISTSERV? Send an e-mail to Sylvia Orli at stone.sylvia@nsmh.si.edu and in the message section write subscribe to vnps-pot, your e-mail address, and your full name. Or visit www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi/vnps-pot.

<p><u>Chapter Events</u> <u>Calendar</u></p> <p>Nov 8 Board Meeting 6:45 PM Green Spring Park</p> <p>Nov 8 Chris Ludwig Virginia Natural Heritage Sites 7:30 pm Green Spring Park</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">  </div>	<p>Potowmack Chapter Virginia Native Plant Society P.O. Box 5311 Arlington, VA 22205</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"><i>Please verify your address information and your renewal date on the mailing label.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-top: 10px;"><i>Printed on recycled paper</i></p>
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