

# POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 24, No. 3

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

May/June 2006

## **MAGNOLIA BOG WALK, SATURDAY MAY 6**

**Rod Simmons**, noted regional field ecologist and VNPS Registry Chair, will lead a walk at Barcroft Magnolia Bog in Arlington on Saturday, May 6 from 10 AM to 1:00 PM. Wear long sleeves and long pants. Bring water and a snack or lunch. We may do some minor invasive plant removal along the way, so bring work gloves if you want to help. Meet at the entrance to the park at the top of the hill near the intersection South Buchanan and South 23rd Streets, near Wakefield High School and Claremont Elementary School.

*Driving directions: From Walter Reed Drive in South Arlington driving south toward Route 7, turn right on Dimwiddie, right on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, right on Buchanan. The park entrance is a very short distance on the left. One can also reach the area via the W & OD bike trail. The magnolia bog is a few hundred feet west of Walter Reed Drive. Join the group by walking up the first significant trail west of the town houses.*



## **TURKEY RUN PARK WALK, SATURDAY MAY 20**

Botany Chair **Cris Fleming** will lead a walk May 20 from 9:30am to 11:00am at Turkey Run Park. This scenic park preserves many native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers in the rocky slopes, steep ravines, and floodplain forest along the Potomac River. Many of the large trees at Turkey Run Park are considered “old growth”; individual specimens of Sugar Maple, Beech, White Oak, and Basswood are the largest found in the Potomac Gorge. This time we will walk downriver from the zig-zag trail, looking for late spring flowers, flowering shrubs, and ferns. Although the first flush of flowering is over, we may see jack-in-the pulpit, golden alexanders, blue cohosh, false solomon's seal, the state rare few-flowered valerian, and several others still in bloom. Meet at Parking Area C1 at 9:30. The walk will last until 11:00, when invasives removal will begin, for those who can participate. To register call Shirley Gay (703-920-1913).

## **POTOWMACK CHAPTER NATIVE PLANT SALE Saturday May 20<sup>th</sup> 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**



***Lindera benzoin* Spicebush**

The star of our spring plant sale will be Spicebush, the 2006 VNPS Wildflower of the Year. Spicebush is a versatile and beautiful shrub with delicate yellow flowers that open in early spring followed by bright red fruits in the fall. It's both attractive and useful—it's the larval food plant for the Spicebush swallowtail butterfly and migrant birds feed on its fruit in the fall. Besides Spicebush we'll be offering many other native shrubs and trees. We'll have Virginia bluebells and a few other spring ephemerals along with perennials for sun and shade and ferns.

For longtime gardeners with plants to spare, we gladly accept donations of native plants to supplement those we grow. Please drop off your donations by May 13th to our propagation area behind the horticulture center at Green Spring. We're there every Wednesday morning from 9:30 to 12:30 and can pot up the plants. If you need help digging up plants or for donating, please call our propagation chair Laura

Beaty at 703-534-8746. We welcome help at the propagation beds on Wednesdays, no experience necessary. Come and learn how to garden with native plants, and meet a great bunch of people.

Plant sale proceeds support our chapter's educational efforts. Please plan to come out on the 20<sup>th</sup>; you'll find us selling plants at our propagation area behind the Greenhouse/Hort Center. It's a busy event so come early or in the afternoon.

*Directions: From I-395, exit at Route 236 West (Little River Turnpike) in Alexandria for 1.5 miles. Turn right past Jerry's Ford at Green Spring Road and proceed one block to the parking lot. Cars will exit on Braddock Road and overflow parking is at Pinecrest Office Park on Braddock.*

**“As the effects of global warming become more and more difficult to ignore, will we react by finally fashioning a global response? Or will we retreat into even narrower and more destructive forms of self interest? It may seem impossible to imagine that a technologically advanced society could choose, in essence, to destroy itself, but that is what we are now in the process of doing.”**

**Elizabeth Kolbert in *Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change*,**

**PRESIDENTS MESSAGE:**

Glorious spring wishes to all our members. It seems as if the season has just exploded with ephemerals blooming and trees budding out and neglected chores piling up while birding and wildflower walks take precedence. I'm sure it's the same for everyone this time of year and it is a truly busy time for chapter volunteers and board members. Propagation committee volunteers are busily potting up hundreds of plants for the spring plant sale. This sale provides most of our funding besides dues and allows us to print the newsletter, offer programs and support worthy projects. Other volunteers are back working at Turkey Run aiding in the effort to diminish invasive threats to the park's beautiful woodlands. And board members are planning programs, getting publicity out, writing the newsletter, working on conservation issues; keeping up with membership....The list goes on. As always, we welcome your help in our efforts. It's really just a small group of people out of our 425 members who are pulling things together. Please think about contributing some of your time---I know it's a scarce resource but we don't need much of it, just a few hours a month. Call me if you'd like to help out---we're going to need a new treasurer this year and some other board members are stepping down so please step up and give a hand. Thanks.

**Marianne Mooney**

**OCEANS OF GRATITUDE FOR THE GENEROSITY OF THE KUST FAMILY**

The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust has accepted a conservation easement of three acres of mature native trees and understory adjacent to Monticello Park in Alexandria from Monte Kust, mother of VNPS member Kathleen Kust. The area is a well-known birding "hot spot," particularly in spring, when numerous species of warblers migrate through. Our deep gratitude goes to the Kust family for saving native habitat for birds and other wildlife.

**RAIN GARDENS HELP CONTROL POLLUTION**

A study conducted by researchers at the University of Connecticut found that appropriately-designed rain gardens can trap 99 percent of nitrates, ammonias, and phosphorous, preventing them from running off into storm sewers and ultimately into streams. Rain gardens replicate nature's way of collecting rainwater and filtering it through the soil. The researchers studied roof runoff flowing into shallow depressions landscaped with hardy shrubs, such as chokeberry (*Aronia* species) and winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), surrounded by bark mulch. Designs that allowed polluted rainwater to pool at the bottom of the gardens permitted bacteria in the soil to convert harmful nitrates into nitrogen gas, preventing them from entering the groundwater.

For design and construction information, see <http://cleanwater.uwex.edu/pubs/raingarden/rgmanual.pdf>.

Also, the 2006 The Native Plant Society of New Jersey has just published a Rain Garden Manual that's available to download free at: [http://www.npsnj.org/rain\\_garden\\_home.htm](http://www.npsnj.org/rain_garden_home.htm). Other resources abound: [www.raingarden.org](http://www.raingarden.org); [www.raingardens.org](http://www.raingardens.org); [www.dof.virginia.gov/rfb/raingardens/shtml](http://www.dof.virginia.gov/rfb/raingardens/shtml); [www.acb-online.org/project.cfm?vid=85](http://www.acb-online.org/project.cfm?vid=85); just Google raingardens.

**NEW DIRECTORY OF WATERSHED-FRIENDLY GARDENS**

Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment has created a directory of watershed-friendly gardens and certified wildlife habitats in Northern Virginia. The directory includes about 50 properties that use landscaping components such as native plants, rain barrels and cisterns, and rain gardens. It is available on-line and in print. To access the online directory, visit <http://www.arlingtonenvironment.org/directory/>. The print version is available by requesting a copy through the ACE office at 703-228-6406.

<b>BOARD OFFICERS</b>		
President	Marianne Mooney	534-8179
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Secretary	Lee Ann Kinzer	768-4048
Treasurer	Vivian "Dusty" Dukes	938-7912
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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](mailto:malawler@aol.com).

**THE GRASS STATION By Constance Casey (from the February 11 New York Times).**

THOSE of us who labor in the garden got an unexpected thrill listening to the State of the Union last week when President Bush touted a plant, switch grass to be exact, as a way to "make our dependence on Middle Eastern oil a thing of the past."

How pleasing to see official presidential recognition of the usefulness and worthiness of this common *member (panicum virgatum)* of the millet family. Previously insufficiently appreciated in our capital, switch grass is inexpensive food for cattle, horses, sheep and goats. This deep-rooted perennial controls erosion by slowing down water run off and keeping beneficial sediments in the field, and it is habitat for songbirds, game birds and waterfowl.

And yes, ethanol can be made from switch grass, which grows in abundance on the prairies of the Great Plains. If grass had ambition (besides wanting to propagate), the *Panicum virgatum* might see itself as a cure for global warming and a savior of the family farm. If burning compressed switch grass really does work to reduce the use of fossil fuels, it would reduce the carbon we release into the air. Then farmers could find new profits in growing the stuff. And the more, the better. Switch grass, like every other plant, takes carbon dioxide out of the air and uses it to build plant tissue. Fold that, Republicans, into your Clear Skies legislation.

Switch grass cleans water as well as air; its wide-spreading roots filter out pesticides, herbicides and excess fertilizer before they reach the waterways. Up in Manitoba, Canada, where they care deeply about staying warm, they're experimenting with stoves that burn pellets of switch grass.

Senator Joseph Lieberman, Democrat of Connecticut, recently recommended switch grass as a balm for international tension. It's likely we'll find ourselves competing with China for oil, he told the Council on Foreign Relations, so we'll need to look at other fuels. He suggested that tons of agricultural materials, like corn, sugar cane and switch grass, could be used "to create billions of barrels of new fuels."

At this point I wouldn't be surprised to hear someone say that switch grass is a cure for lower-back pain and nearsightedness.

Family farmers know that switch grass is easy to grow. It doesn't complain about growing in sand; it doesn't mind clay either. It's tolerant of floods as well as of droughts. It would work as part of the effort to restore the Louisiana wetlands that can help protect New Orleans from hurricanes.

Switch grass is native to most of North America, from Canada to Texas. The day after the State of the Union, the president joked that he might bring in a few extra dollars at his Crawford ranch by growing switch grass for fuel. Whoa, Mr. President, take a look next time you're trimming the brush: odds are you have plenty.

Let's not forget that switch grass is beautiful and looks great in floral arrangements. On the very same day the president spoke, I got the latest Brooklyn Botanic Garden handbook, "Designing Borders for Sun and Shade," in the mail. The handbook strongly recommended switch grass as part of a perennial border. There's "Dallas Blues," "Alamo," and the prettiest, wine-red "Shenandoah." The handbook suggests combining switch grass with asters, sunflowers and black-eyed Susans for an all-native garden with a nice prairie feel.

To me, though this may seem at first unrelated, this is just one more reason that "America the Beautiful" should be our national anthem instead of that song with the bombs bursting in air. The clue to achieving clean fuel, clean air, clean water, world peace has been right there all the time in those "amber waves of grain."

**Constance Casey, a former New York City Parks Department gardener, writes about gardening for Slate.**

**GEOLOGICALLY AND FLORISTICALLY DIVERSE NATURAL AREAS IN THE VICINITY OF WASHINGTON, D.C. By Rod Simmons (from his March 9 presentation to the Potowmack Chapter)****Coastal Plain Region**

**Flag Ponds**, Calvert County, Maryland - spring ephemerals; Shell-Marl Ravine Forest; coastal wetlands; extensive Chesapeake Bay beachfront with rare coastal flora. Small entrance fee, good trails and boardwalk.

**Battlecreek Cypress Swamp**, Calvert County, Maryland - old-age, relict stand of Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) with interesting wildflowers like Pink Turtlehead. Nature Center and boardwalk.

**Chapman Forest**, Charles County, Maryland - probably Maryland's largest and best remaining example of rare Shell-Marl Ravine Forest; old-age forest; diverse vegetation; river terraces; coastal wetlands; undeveloped Potomac River shoreline; magnificent view of Potomac River from back of Mount Aventine. Some trails.

**Fort Washington Park**, Prince George's County, Maryland - rare Shell-Marl Ravine Forest; old-age forest; undeveloped Potomac shoreline. Small entrance fee, good trails.

**Piscataway Park**, Prince George's County, Maryland - extensive wetlands and tidal marsh; old-age Shell-Marl Ravine Forest; undeveloped Potomac shoreline. Good trails and boardwalk.

**Crow's Nest**, Stafford County, Virginia - large site with excellent stands of old-age, calcareous coastal forest and rare flora; extensive, pristine tidal marshes and wetlands. Private site, but VNPS FAC occasionally leads walks - contact Hal Wiggins.

**Patuxent Research Wildlife Refuge**, Prince George's County, Maryland – Pine Barrens Woodland of mixed oaks and Pitch Pine (*Pinus rigida*) visible from Scarlet Tanager Loop (entrance to National Wildlife Visitors Center) off Powder Mill Road. Visitors Center and trails.

**Suitland Bog**, Prince George's County, Maryland - excellent example of globally-rare Fall Line Magnolia Bog. Boardwalk.

**Hollywood Swamp**, Prince George's County, Maryland - an exceptional, old-age Coastal Plain Bottomland Hardwood Forest; wetlands. Some trails.

**Huntley Meadows**, Fairfax County, Virginia - Coastal Plain Bottomland Hardwood Forest; extensive wetlands. Nature Center, good trails, and boardwalk.

### Fall Line

**Gunpowder Falls**, Baltimore County, Maryland - vast area with beautiful scenery, diverse flora, and interesting geology and abundant rock outcrops. MNPS frequently leads walks to region.

**Rock Creek Park**, Washington, D.C. - beautiful, forested park with sections of old-age forest; abundant rock outcrops. Nature Center and good trails.

**Fort Circle Parks**, eastern Washington, D.C. - excellent examples of Terrace Gravel Forest and spectacular views of Nation's Capital. MNPS frequently leads walks to parks.

**Arlington Woods**, Robert E. Lee Memorial at Arlington House atop Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington County, Virginia - a new VNPS registered site; old-growth oak forest remnant. Some trails.

**Glen Carlyn Park** (also Long Branch Park), Arlington County, Virginia - largest stand of old-age, mountain laurel-oak forest remaining in county; relict American Chestnuts (*Castanea dentata*); beautiful stream valleys. Nature Center and good trails.

**Barcroft Park**, Arlington County, Virginia - Arlington's globally rare remnant Magnolia Bog and Seepage Swamp; beautiful upland gravel forest. Some trails.

**Turkeycock Run Stream Valley Park** (adjoins Mason District Park), Fairfax County, Virginia - beautiful, high-elevation Terrace Gravel Forest and stream valley. Good trails.

**Holmes Run Gorge**, Fairfax County, Virginia - picturesque, forested stream valley with high cliffs and abundant rock outcrops; diverse flora and geology. Some trails, park opposite Lake Barcroft Dam.

**Accotink Bluffs**, Fairfax County, Virginia - beautiful, forested stream valley with cliffs and massive rock outcrops; diverse flora. Area extends from Lake Accotink to convergence with Springfield/Fairfax Parkway and follows bike path.

### Piedmont

**Soldier's Delight Serpentine Barrens**, Baltimore County, Maryland Travilah Serpentine Barrens, Montgomery County, Maryland

**Hoyle's Mill Diabase Area**, Montgomery County, Maryland

**Runnymede Park**, Herndon (Fairfax County), Virginia – diabase Elklick Run Natural Area, Fairfax County, Virginia off Pleasant Valley Road- diabase

**Cub Run Woodland**, Fairfax County, Virginia – diabase

**Ellanor Lawrence Park**, Fairfax County, Virginia

**Manassas Battlefields**, Prince William County, Virginia

**Bull Run**, Prince William County, Virginia - Virginia Bluebell (*Mertensia virginica*) site

**Ball's Bluff**, Loudoun County, Virginia

**Chilton Woods**, Montgomery County, Maryland - 2 miles west of White's Ferry along C&O Canal towpath.

### Mountain Region

**Calmes Neck**, Clark County, Virginia - limestone; rare flora. VNPS Piedmont Chapter registry site.

**Snyder's Landing**, Washington County, Maryland - limestone; rare flora. Cris Fleming and Carole Bergmann often lead spring wildflower walks here.

**Harper's Ferry**, West Virginia - tri-state convergence; spectacular views; diverse flora.

*One can check out MNPS Native News/website for upcoming walks to many of the Maryland sites*

### ARLINGTON'S RiP PROJECT

**Sat. May 2 Rock Spring Park** 9am-11am. . If you haven't seen Rock Spring Park, you are missing out on a "little gem" of a park. If a park can be cute, Rock Spring is. Come help us get a start on removing the small patches of invasive plants that are impacting the streamside vegetation. Meet by the parks building at the Little Falls Rd entrance near Little Falls Rd and N George Mason Dr.

**Sat. May 13 - 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 Huennkens at 524-3853, or [jhuenn@gwu.edu](mailto:jhuenn@gwu.edu).

**Sat. June 10 - Second Saturdays at Bluemont Park** 9am - Noon. pm (See above for details)

**Note: Some training and 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, please contact Jan Ferrigan, Invasive Species Program Coordinator at (703) 228 7636 or [jferriga@vt.edu](mailto:jferriga@vt.edu).**

### **LOCAL EVENTS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:**

**Sat. May 6 Appalachian Spring** 9am-2pm. with Stan Shetler. Thompson Wildlife Management Area near Linden, VA. Audubon Naturalist Society, \$32 for non-members. Call: 301-652-9188 x16

**Sat. May 6. Dyke Marsh Invasives removal** Alexandria, 10am to noon Call Brynna Cox, 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

**Fri. May 12 Spring Wildflowers of the Potomac River Gorge.** Bear Island, MD. 10 am to 12:30pm with Cris Fleming, Audubon Naturalist Society, \$22 for non-members. Call: 301-652-9188 x16

**Sun. May 14 Mothers Day Wildflower Walk.** Potomac Overlook Regional Park 2p.m. A park naturalist will identify flowers and discuss their folklore and uses. Adults and children (all ages welcome; best suited for kids 6 and older). 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.*

**Fri. May 19. Geology and Wildflower Hike in the Massanutts** (Adults), 8am-3pm, Riverbend Visitor Center, Stunning synclines and other geologic features await you on this 5-mile hike. Along the way we'll enjoy the mountain spring ephemerals and panoramic mountain views. Reservations and advanced payment required by 5/1. \$25 Call 703-759-9018 for reservations

**Sat. June 17 An Introduction to Edible Wild Plants 2pm** Potomac Overlook Regional Park Join a park naturalist for an indoor presentation and an outdoor hike on edible wild plants in our area. The program will cover "do's and don'ts" of wild food gathering, history of food use, nutrition, and much, much more! Samples will be available! Arrive prepared to spend an hour or more on the trail. Adults and youth age 8 and older. For more information, call 703-528-5406. *Directions: See above*

**June 28-Aug. 2 Mushroom Identification** Wednesdays 6:30pm – 8:30pm Cris Fleming. Woodend Sanctuary in Chevy Chase. Sponsored by Audubon Naturalist Society \$39 for non-members. For Information call: 301-652-9188 x16

**WANT TO JOIN THE CHAPTER LISTSERV?** Send an e-mail to [stones@si.edu](mailto:stones@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>

**SAVE THIS WEEKEND: September 23-24, 2006 The Shenandoah Chapter is hosting the annual VNPS meeting this fall. It is a weekend event which includes full day and half-day field trips on Saturday, an annual meeting with a speaker and dinner Saturday evening; half-day field trips on Sunday.**

### **LANDSCAPE DESIGN WITH NATIVE PLANTS**

Do you know of a company or a person who will do landscape design using native plants? We are often asked that question and are looking for help coming up with a list. Please send your responses to: [malawler@aol.com](mailto:malawler@aol.com). Meanwhile, we know of two companies:

--Native by Design, operated by John Magee: <http://members.aol.com/euphorbia/> and

--Nature by Design in Vienna and Alexandria <http://www.nature-by-design.com/alexandria.html>

Nature by Design of Vienna has just opened a full service garden center featuring mostly native plants near Potomac Yards in Alexandria. *Directions: From 495, take 395 north toward Arlington to the Glebe Road exit. Turn right at Glebe Road; go to Route 1 (Jeff. Davis Highway). Turn right at Route 1. Look for the Afghan Restaurant on the right; Calvert Avenue is immediately after the restaurant. Turn right on Calvert Avenue to the cul-de-sac. We are through the double gates behind the main building.*

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

The VNPS Potowmack chapter will continue to work 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 George Washington Memorial Parkway. Wear work gloves and boots or sturdy shoes, and bring water, snacks, and hand saws or loppers if you have them. You are always welcome to bring friends. For information call Mary Travaglini at: (301) 897-8570, Potomac Gorge Habitat Restoration Manager, The Nature Conservancy.

**May 4:** 1-4pm Viburnum. Meet at parking lot C2

**May 20: Cris Fleming** walk 9:30-11:00, lunch break, then work on Viburnum until 3.  
Meet at Parking Lot C1.

**June 11:** 10am to 1 pm Viburnum. meet at Parking Lot C2

**June 17:** 10am to 1 pm Meeting place to be determined.



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

**Chapter Events Calendar**

May	6	<b>Magnolia Bog Walk</b> 10-2
May	11	<b>Board meeting,</b> Green Spring 7:30
May	20	<b>Native Plant Sale</b> Green Spring 9 to 3
June	8	<b>Board meeting,</b> Green Spring 7:30

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