

# POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 10, No. 6

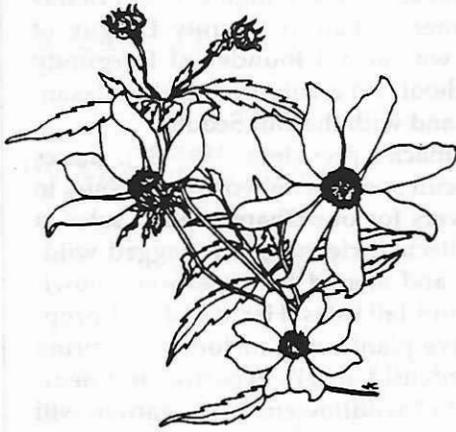
Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Winter 1992/93

## Native Plant Trail Volunteer Recognition Day

November 14 - 2 to 4 pm

Trail Tour, Dedication Ceremony, Reception  
Green Spring Gardens Park Horticultural Center



Tickseed Sunflower  
(*Bidens polylepis*)

## Potowmack's Lending Library

Tiana Camfiord

Laurel Scull, who gave generously of her time and talent during the formation of VNPS ten years ago and who worked continuously for eight years to establish and maintain the propagation beds at Green Spring, died recently (see tribute on p. 2). She leaves with all of us who knew her a large measure of her kindness, humor, and humility.

In the spirit of her support for VNPS, Laurel requested that her gardening books be given to our chapter. We have gratefully accepted them from her children and are using them to establish a Potowmack Chapter lending library.

It has been a labor of love to cata-

continued page 5

It's the end of another planting season for the native plant trail at Green Spring and we have much to celebrate. First, we want to thank our intern, Kim Brown Woodwell, for her hard work on the trail (see Kim's article in this newsletter). She worked with Brenda throughout the summer and continues this fall to weed, plant, mulch, water, and catalog. Kim is currently a graduate student in horticulture at the University of Maryland. On November 14th she will lead us on a tour of the trail that will feature the latest additions.

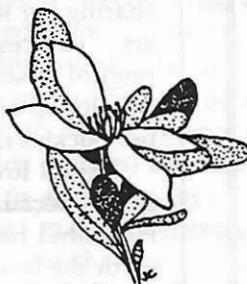
Second, we want to honor the two extraordinary Potowmack Chapter members whose efforts during the Chapter's formative years ensured the success of the propagation beds and plant sales at Green Spring. For eight years Laurel Scull and Margaret James raised and sold plants; the result was a Chapter treasury fat enough to allow us to begin a several-thousand-dollar project. To these two special women, we will dedicate the teak bench located at the

orientation spot on the trail. Laurel, whose recent death saddened us all, will be represented by her children at our special ceremony.

Third, we want to recognize the hundreds of hours of volunteer service by Chapter members who risked poison ivy contact, below-freezing winds, suffocatingly hot days, and aching backs to clear, plant and mulch the trail. Truly, without their efforts the progress on the trail would not be so advanced.

Fourth, we want to praise the efficiency and dedication of Green Spring horticulturist, Brenda Skarphol, who does a terrific job coordinating all the work on the trail. With unflagging good humor and boundless (and we do mean without limit!) energy, she has organized volunteer workers; supervised our intern; purchased, and often personally picked up, plants; modified the trail design when necessary; documented every plant; dumped dozens (possibly hundreds!) of loads of mulch; watered; and generally nurtured every plant on the trail. Brenda is a great asset to

continued page 4



St. Andrew's Cross  
(*Ascyrum hypericoides*)

## Chapter Events

**General Meeting** - October 22nd

**Recognition Day** - November 14

**Board Meeting** - November 19

### Thoughts from the President:

Fall came in like gangbusters and I guess some of us were ready for it! We are beginning a new season and the plants (and people) have already started to respond. Members who attended, enjoyed a successful Annual Meeting at which we reminisced about the past and made plans for the future. A draft calendar of activities for 1992/93 was greeted with enthusiasm. The plan is to have a general meeting every other month featuring presentations of interesting topics. Members at the meeting were asked to submit suggestions for topics. It is not too late to send your ideas to our PO box or call a board member. The draft calendar will be approved next month. Immediate future plans include an October general meeting on "Fall Seed Collection and Propagation". Check the calendar for details.

Increasing membership and encouraging members to participate in activities are my goals this year. I hope to have your help and support. One new initiative is a Chapter Speaker's Bureau. I am looking for volunteers who will develop outlines for talks, rework our slide collection, recruit speakers, and schedule speaking engagements. I believe this kind of effort could really spread our cause. Call me (number below) if you would like to help.

Finally, I want to encourage you to vote in November for the three bond issues. Of course, of particular concern to those of us in the environmental community is the preservation of natural areas and designation of parkland. Virginia is 47th in acquisition of new parkland. But, both the Mental Health and Education Bonds are also very important to our communities. So be sure to vote for all three in November.

Anne Haynes

Potowmack Chapter  
Virginia Native Plant Society  
P.O. Box 161  
McLean, VA 22101

#### Board Officers

|                |                |          |
|----------------|----------------|----------|
| President      | Anne Haynes    | 836-0925 |
| Vice President | Nancy Luria    | 528-3612 |
| Secretary      | Laura Beaty    | 534-8746 |
| Treasurer      | Ben FitzGerald | 280-4918 |

#### Committee Chairs

|               |                       |          |
|---------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Botany        | Marion Blois Lobstein | 536-7150 |
| Education     | Liz Smith             | 768-1697 |
| Hospitality   | Margaret Pridgen      | 591-1235 |
| Membership    | Anne Crocker          | 437-0355 |
| Propagation   | Tiana Camfiord        | 830-3783 |
| and Sales     | Gerry Pratt           | 323-1094 |
| Publications  | Norma Vermillion      | 451-0572 |
| Newsletter    | Lynda Heise           | 354-6560 |
| Site Registry | Mary Pockman          | 356-7425 |
| Tours         | Edith Bradbury        | 971-8878 |

Mail articles for the newsletter to  
L. Heise,  
5409 Mallard Landing  
Lothian, MD 20711

### *In Memoriam*

Our beloved charter member, Laurel DeMerit Scull, 79, died of cancer August 4th at her home in Annandale.

Laurel was born in Stamford, Connecticut and lived in the Washington area since 1917. She graduated from the University of Maryland where she majored in home economics education. In the 1930's, she was the first female ever to work for the D.C. Housing Authority. She was a founding member of the Langley Hill Friends Meeting and a member of Fairfax County League of Women Voters. She was also a founder of Burgundy Farm Country Day School and a volunteer at the Alexandria Day Care Center and with the Girl Scouts.

Ed Ballard, Potowmack's president (1985-87), shares with us that "Laurel Scull spent many volunteer hours in propagating wildflowers for our Chapter plant sales at Green Spring. She collected, cleaned, and bagged wildflower seeds for sale and shared her extensive knowledge at those spring and fall sales. Her woodland property, replete with native plants, was included on spring tours of members' gardens. Laurel's expertise and dedicated efforts on behalf of wildflowers in the garden will be long remembered by her friends and fellow members."

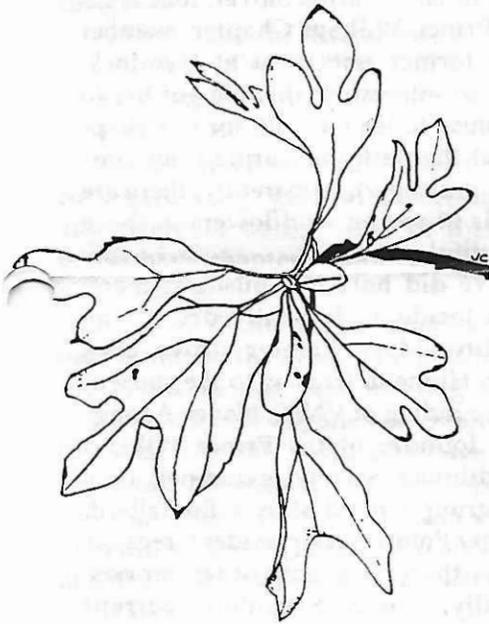
Another member, Tiana Camfiord, says that "Laurel's memorial service (which was held at the Friends Meeting House in Langley) was really a celebration of her life". Potowmack Chapter members provided the very special floral arrangements for the service.

When asked for thoughts about their mother, her children (Barbara, Priscilla, David and Jonathan) sent us the following: "Growing flowers from seed was a lifetime love - from the days of her childhood in D.C. She called herself a 'seedaholic' - patiently coaxing plants to grow in a ragtag assortment of plastic containers which filled every flat surface in the house. She loved the process of nurturing as much as enjoying the beautiful results; was a meticulous note-taker; and started keeping a yearly journal back in 1957 with information on times of plantings, conditions under which things grew (or didn't) and when flowers bloomed. She was an avid collector of books and seed catalogs and loved nothing more than sharing her love and knowledge of wildflowers with others -- novices and experts alike. She was an early participant of 'rescue missions' on properties that were being developed and would also carry little baggies around in her pockets in case she found some seeds to collect."

Laurel loved to work with the earth, never wearing gloves because she liked the feel of the soil in her fingers. Her ashes have been scattered so she is now part of the earth she loved so much.

## Medicinal Plants and the 1492 Columbian Discovery of the New World

by Marion Lobstein



This October is the five-hundredth anniversary of the 1492 "discovery" of the New World by Columbus. This "discovery" has been described by many as "the collision of two old worlds." The exchange of knowledge of medicinal plants was an important result of the meeting of these two worlds.

Native American tribes north of Mexico at the time of the Columbian discovery had, according to many estimates, up to 750 or more species of medicinal plants in use to treat routine problems of the urinary and gastrointestinal tracts (including intestinal parasites and hemorrhoids),

rheumatic conditions, and eye irritations (from smoky living conditions) wounds, fractures, and rashes. Many of their techniques, especially in dealing with wounds and with childbirth (including advanced methods of delivering the placenta), involved near-aseptic measures that included the use of medicinal plants such as extracts of wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) rhizome, now known to have antiseptic properties.

Native Americans not only eased certain "female problems" such as painful menstruation and difficult birth by using plants, but they also could induce abortions and practice birth control using them. They were, therefore, employing more humane practices than their contemporaries in Europe. Some of the plants they used to increase uterine contractions were blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*), golden ragwort (*Senecio aureus*), wild ginger (*A. canadense*), and trilliums (*Trillium* spp.).

Early English and French explorers, fur traders, and colonists were more willing than Spanish explorers to exchange information on medicinal plants with Native Americans. Cartier, the French explorer of the 1530's, for example, was losing most of his crew to the ravages of scurvy until he found Native Americans used the bark of conifers such as hemlock or spruce for vitamin C.

Following contact with white men, American natives eagerly adopted the new European medicinal plants to deal with the deadly new diseases given to them by the Europeans. Some of the Old World plants (many of which are now considered lawn or roadside "weeds") that quickly naturalized were coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*) for coughs, common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) as a laxative and to purify blood, flannel mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) for kidney problems and to ease pain, burdock (*Actinum minus*) to treat venereal disease and to cleanse the blood, English plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) as a diuretic and as an antiseptic, catnip (*Nepeta cataria*)

to treat female problems and intestinal worms, garlic mustard (*Allaria officinalis*) for a diuretic and antiseptic, ground-ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) for colds and measles, and common chickweed (*Stellaria medica*) for worms and poultices.

Culpeper, in his European herbal of the mid-1600's, lists many species introduced from the New World into the Old. The export of New World plants to the Old World began early with quinine to fight malaria, evening primrose (*Oenothera biennis*) to treat asthma and whooping cough, sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) and lobelia species (*Lobelia cardinalis*, *L. inflata*, and *L. siphilitica*) to treat syphilis, amaranth (*Amaranthus* spp.) to treat venereal diseases and smallpox, dogbane (*Apocynum* spp.) to treat worms and syphilis, even poison ivy (*Rhus radicans*) as a diuretic and laxative! Tobacco (*Nicotiana* spp.) was first introduced to Europe as much for its medicinal properties as for the pleasure of smoking. American natives primarily smoked tobacco during religious ceremonies, but they also used it as a sedative, anti-spasmodic, insecticide, vermifuge (to treat intestinal worms), and as a dressing for wounds.

The above lists of medicinal plant species exchanged between the Old and New World include only a sampling of the many species that traveled the ocean during this important period of our history. The next time you pull up a dandelion from your lawn, give your cat a catnip treat, or avoid contact with poison ivy, remember the role that these plants and many others we take for granted once played in history.

Marion is an Associate Professor of Biology at NVCC - Manassas Campus.

## Recognition Day

from page 1

both Green Spring and the Potowmack Chapter.

To all of these people and to you, our members who have faithfully paid your dues, we dedicate the Fairfax County Park Service Award recently given to the Potowmack Chapter in recognition of its contribution to Green Spring Gardens Park. On October 1st, Anne Haynes, President, and Nancy Luria, Vice President, accepted this award from the Fairfax County Board Chairman, Thomas M. Davis III, on behalf of the Chapter. Representatives from local newspapers and TV stations were on hand to report the honors and so helped to spread the word about VNPS's important work. We are very grateful to Green Spring's Manager, Don Humphrey, for nominating us for this special recognition.

Please join us on November 14th for the tour of the trail, the bench dedication ceremony, and a lively reception. Rain or shine.

## Upcoming Events

from back page

### "Greenbelt of Stuttgart" Lecture

An illustrated lecture will be given by Klaus-Jurgen Evert, German ecologist, landscape architect and urban park administrator of the "Greenbelt of Stuttgart". The presentation will describe 70 years of open space planning and its culmination in Stuttgart's 1993 International Horticultural Exhibition. The talk will be held at the American Horticultural Society's River Farm, 7931 East Blvd. Drive, Alexandria (just south of stone bridge off the George Washington Parkway) on Friday, November 6, at 11 a.m. Potowmack Chapter member and American Society of Landscape Architects fellow, Ed Ballard, will introduce the speaker. A reception and refreshments will follow the lecture. There is no charge for AHS members, \$10 for non-members, and

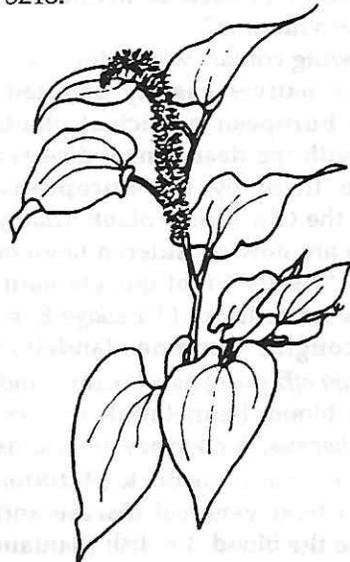
\$5 for students. To reserve a place call Maureen Hoffernan on (703) 768-5700.

### BayScapes

A BayScapes workshop is scheduled for October 24th in Richmond. The morning session, held from 9 a.m. to noon at the Richmond City Hall, will feature an overview of BayScapes material, presentations on small-scale urban gardening, and low-input gardening. An afternoon field day from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at James River and Byrd Park, features hands-on activities and demonstrations. A \$10 registration fee includes a box lunch. For more information contact Carole Ann Barth, 1-800-662-CRIS

### Controlling Invasive Plants

Ted Scott, VNPS Conservation Chair, will lead a panel discussion on invasive plants and ways of controlling them on November 18, 8:30 am to 3:15 pm, at the Metropolitan Council of Governments, 77 North Capitol St., N.E., Washington D.C. (two blocks from Union Station). The \$10 fee includes the illustrated program, continental breakfast, and buffet lunch. For reservations call Jennifer Greenfeld, Community Forestry Network at COG, (202) 962-3218.



Lizard's Tail  
(*Saururus cernuus*)

## Potowmack and Prince William Chapter Joint Annual Meeting

Nancy Luria

The joke is official: You need rain? Schedule a Potowmack Chapter event. What some people don't realize is that nothing stops dedicated plant people. Yes, we walked in the (often pouring) rain at Hemlock Overlook Park and had a good time too! In fact, Martha Slover, tour leader, Prince William Chapter member and former naturalist at Hemlock, was so interesting that we got her to promise to lead a walk for our chapter at the park this spring (buy your rain gear now). Apparently, there are loads of spring wildflowers in those beautiful woods.

We did hold our business meetings inside a pleasantly dry dining facility. Mary Painter drove over from Hume to treat us to the story of the founding of VNPS. Nancy Arrington, founder of the Prince William Wildflower Society, explained how her group jointed Mary's. Ed Ballard, former Potowmack president, regaled us with rescue adventure stories. Finally, Nicky Staunton, current VNPS president, inspired us with the society's mission for the next decade. As always, the people (and the great food) made this gathering worthwhile. We can learn so much from each other. Hope to see more of you at the up-coming events!

*Very special thanks to Margaret Pridgen who set a beautiful table for the pot-luck dinner and to Norma Vermillion who recreated Potowmack's ten years in a wonderful display of old newsletters, brochures and other printed material. Valued charter members both!*

**Library** from page 1

log the 31 hardback and numerous paperback books and pamphlets that came from Laurel's library. Several are classics, many are out of print, and some, such as Dorothy Klaber's books on Violets and Gentians are considered definitive studies on those subjects. Several books include Laurel's notes for her own garden. I plan to copy these and keep them in a special reference notebook to which we may choose to add remarks about our own gardening experiences in Northern Virginia.

The wildflower books are grouped into the following categories:

1. Identification/ Reference
2. Culture/ Propagation
3. General/ Essays
4. Endangered

We also have numerous books on rock gardening, general gardening, and reference books. Most of these books have chapters on or reference native plants.

Since we do not yet have a permanent home for the library, I will bring the books to our next meeting on October 22nd for anyone who wishes to check one out. I will also have a typed title and topic index and, hopefully, an author index. If you can not attend the meeting, I can be reached at 830-3783 and will mail you a list of the books.

We hope that this library will be especially helpful to newer members and to those who do not have time to join us as we work on rescues or at the beds and trail at Green Spring where we get a lot of "hands-on" experience with natives.

If any of you have books that you would like to contribute to our new library, please call me and I will arrange a time to pick them up.

Again, we wish to thank the Scull Family for this wonderful and thoughtful contribution toward the growth of our chapter and the continuation of the philosophy of VNPS that Laurel loved and believed in. It is truly another celebration of her life.

## Native Plant Trail: The Intern's Viewpoint

Kim Brown Woodwell

Summer was a busy time on the Virginia Native Plant Trail. I am still amazed at all the changes. After tremendous efforts by Green Spring and VNPS volunteers, it is hard to believe that any weeds, poison ivy or multi-flora rose could still exist! I guess I'll have to leave the final clearing victory to a future VNPT intern.

I will try to update recent happenings for anyone who hasn't visited lately - but let me also encourage you to stop by soon! We have four upcoming work days, October 6 and 10 and November 10 and 14, so come by and give us a hand! As I think of all that we have done this summer, I realize that Brenda has kept us on a busy schedule - slopes cleared, weeds pulled, areas mulched and lots planted. And throughout, we were able to enjoy the changing displays of the upper border and several visits by the hummingbirds.

Two other important successes of the summer are the VNPT brochure, which has been quite helpful for both new and old visitors, and the new plant labels. As a Master's candidate in horticulture at University of Maryland, I especially find the labels very helpful and am constantly quizzing myself on plant names and spellings.

Even with all the activity and work to be done, we were able to take some time to get to other gardens and nurseries. At the Henry Foundation for Botanical Research in Gladwyne, PA, we were given a special tour of founder Mary G. Henry's unique collection of native plants. We also toured the Scott Aboretum of Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, PA, and visited Winterthur Garden in Delaware. These were fascinating trips. The Scott Aboretum and Winterthur in particular, both have incredible plant material and unique settings.

As fall approaches, I look forward to discovering and enjoying the surprises of fall in the VNPT - and I look forward to seeing you on Saturday, November 14 for a VNPT walk!

## Wildflowers Postal Service Album

Did you know that three of our members photographs are included in the limited edition Wildflowers by the United States Postal Service? Marion Blois Lobstein, Jessie Harris, and Kent Minichiello all contributed to this stunning collection of over 200 "true-to-life" color pictures. What an honor! We congratulate them.

If you would like a copy, stop by the post office or call 1-800-Stamp-24, operator 605.

## Wildflower Drawings

Featured in this issue of Potowmack news are the drawings of Jane Collins, chapter member, landscape designer, and librarian. Jane's portfolio of native plant drawings is a recent accomplishment. Although Jane's interest in art is life-long (and generational - father and grandmother were artistic), it took becoming a member of VNPS for Jane to realize the pleasure of plein-air sketching. Attending plant walks and using natives in her landscape designs inspired Jane to take a closer look at some of her favorite wildflowers. She travels with her sketchbook and records in pen and ink and/or pencil the specimen plants that catch her eye. Included here are some of her favorites.



## UPCOMING WILDFLOWER EVENTS:

### **Native Plant Trail**

Volunteer work days (see calendar for dates) from 9 a.m. to noon. If you are interested in volunteering, call Nancy Luria at (703) 528-3612 to register for individual work days. Tasks that volunteers have helped with include planting, watering, weeding, mulching, raking leaves, and clearing brush.

### **Fall Seed Collection and Propagation**

Jan Midgley, chapter member and owner of a wildflower nursery will speak at our general meeting on October 22 at 7:30 p.m. in the Green Spring Horticultural center. The topic will be fall seed collection and propagation. Preceding the talk will be a half-hour board meeting.

### **Arborfest**

"Gardening for the Future" at the State Arboretum, Blandy Experimental Farm on October 18 from 1 to 5 pm. Information tables (backyard habitats, edible landscaping, natural garden design, gardening with children, composting, etc.), demonstrations (pruning, tree climbing, power yard equipment, composters), lectures (Holly Shimizu from the Botanic Gardens on "Great Garden Plants, Old and New", 2 p.m., and Ian Robertson, Garden Design Co., on "Organic Planting and Care", 3 p.m.), children's activities (worm composting, 2:30 p.m.), raffles, food, gift shop, and plant sale (woody and perennial). Bring your green and black plastic pots and trays for recycling. For more information contact the Arboretum at (703) 837-1758.

### **Native Plants: Restoring their habitats**

This Maryland Native Plant Society Conference will be held October 24th from 10am - 5pm at the Agriculture

### **October**

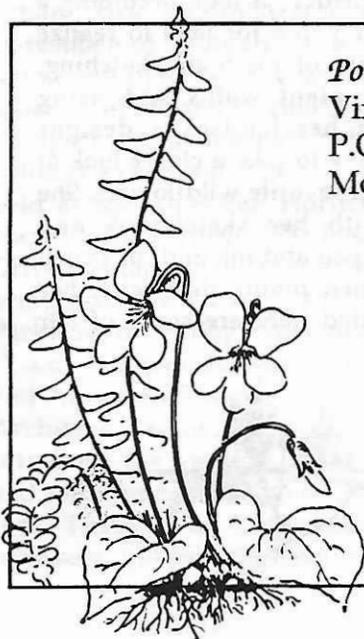
- 6 Tue **Native Trail Work Day** - Green Spring Gardens Park, 9am - noon
- 10 Sat **Native Trail Work Day** - Green Spring Gardens Park, 9am - noon
- 18 Sat **Arborfest** - State Arboretum
- 22 Thu **General Meeting -7pm Fall Seed Collection and Propagation** 7:30pm - Green Spring Gardens Park
- 24 Sat **Native Plants: Restoring their habitats** - Agricultural Farm Park, Derwood, MD
- 24 Sat **BayScapes** - Richmond, 9am - 4pm

### **November**

- 6 Fri **"Greenbelt of Stuttgart" Lecture** - American Horticultural Society, 11am
- 10 Tue **Native Trail Work Day** - Green Spring Gardens Park, 9am - noon
- 14 Sat **Recognition Day** - Green Spring Gardens Park, 2 - 4pm
- 18 Wed **Controlling Invasives** - Metropolitan Council of Governments, 8:30am - 3:15pm
- 19 Thu **Board Meeting** - Green Spring Gardens Park, 7pm

real Farm Park in Derwood, MD. It will feature sessions such as landscaping, use of native water plants and getting rid of intrusive non-native plants. The conference fee is \$40 members, and \$50 non-members. Contact Nancy Luria (528-3612) for details.

continued on page 4



*Potomack Chapter*  
Virginia Native Plant Society  
P.O. Box 161  
McLean, Virginia 22101



*Fall Seed Collection*

*Propagation with Jan Midgley*  
*Thursday October 22nd*