



Self-Guided Walk at Doves Landing Park

9307 Doves Lane, Manassas, VA 20112

Fall 2020

Take our “20-flag” walk to discover some of the plants that grow here and are recognizable through fall. The numbers on the pink flags begin at the trailhead at the parking lot and continue along the orange-blazed trail. These plants were flagged on September 23, 2020. Because this list was created for the entire fall season, most blooming species were purposefully omitted. See the note at the end of this list.

1. **American Holly** (*Ilex opaca*) Native. This evergreen tree provides cover and nesting sites for wildlife and has sharp-tipped leaves that are often used for holiday decorations. Its berries ripen to bright red and attract many bird and small mammal species, but they are poisonous to humans. Only female trees (such as this one) produce the berries and a male tree must be nearby for pollination. American Holly is the larval host plant for Henrys Elfin butterfly.

To the right of the Holly is a nonnative **Linden Viburnum** (*V. dilatatum*) covered in red berries (drupes) in late September. This shrub is from eastern Asia and was introduced in the US in the early 1800s as an ornamental. Unfortunately, it has escaped from gardens and is becoming invasive throughout the mid-Atlantic states. It casts dense shade suppressing native shrubs, small trees, and wildflowers. It leafs out earlier in the spring and retains its leaves later in the fall than most native vegetation, giving it a competitive advantage. *Do not plant this shrub in your home garden!*

2. **Christmas Fern** (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) Native. This evergreen fern has a stem that is green and scaly, and its spores cover the back of a leaflet. It is a perennial native to eastern North America, from Nova Scotia west to Minnesota and south to Florida and eastern Texas. It is one of the most common ferns in eastern North America, being found in moist and shady habitats in woodlands, stream banks, and rocky slopes. The common name derives from the evergreen sterile fronds, which are green at Christmas and beyond. They are often flattened to the ground by low temperatures and snow cover. Some people see the stocking-shaped fronds as another connection to the Christmas name.
3. **Partridge-berry** (*Mitchella repens*) Native. Tiny white flowers form in pairs in April and May and, if pollinated, fuse to form one red berry on this diminutive evergreen groundcover. Partridge-berry is common throughout Virginia; its berries are edible, but flavorless. It was the Virginia Native Plant Society's [Wildflower of the Year](#) in 2012.
4. **Common Running-cedar** (*Diphasiastrum Digitatum*) Native. This is a clubmoss that derives its common name from its resemblance to cedar boughs lying on the ground. Its leaves are scale-like similar to a mature cedar, and it is glossy and evergreen. It normally grows to a height of about four inches, with the spore-bearing strobili held higher. This plant was once widely harvested and sold as Christmas greenery, and populations were widely depleted for this reason. Spores are highly flammable due to their high oil content. Clubmosses or Lycophytes evolved about 410 million years ago as one of the earliest groups of vascular plants. It prefers previously disturbed areas and coniferous forests. Watch for more Running-cedar along the way and look for the taller strobili in populations farther into the forest.

5. **American Beech Tree** (*Fagus grandifolia*) Native. Beech trees have smooth bark, grow to 60-80 feet, and prefer moist, well-drained, acid soil. They are relatively resistant to deer browse. Beechnuts are eaten by small mammals, white-tailed deer, black bears, foxes, ruffed grouse, wild turkeys, ducks, woodpeckers, white-breasted nuthatches, American crows, and blue jays. Beech trees, especially young ones, often retain their leaves through the winter. This phenomenon is called marcescence. These marcescent leaves bleach from tan to a cream-color during the winter. (See #16 for a species dependent upon Beech Trees.)
6. **Sassafras Tree** (*Sassafras albidum*) Native. These are three baby Sassafras trees. This tree is unusual for having three distinct leaf patterns on the same plant: unlobed oval, bilobed (mitten-shaped), and trilobed (three-pronged). Sassafras tree roots were used in traditional root beer and sassafras root tea, and ground leaves of sassafras are a distinctive additive in Louisiana Creole dishes. Sassafras trees can grow to 50 feet and are the larval host for 34 butterflies and moths including Spicebush and Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterflies and Promethea and Cecropia moths. Mature trees produce drupes (berries) in fall that are eaten by many birds including orioles and bluebirds, and their white flowers in spring produce nectar for mining and sweat bees.
7. **Red Maple** (*Acer rubrum*) Native. Look around and you will notice that you are in a small grove of maple trees. The Red Maple is named for its red flowers, red fruit (seeds/samaras), and red twigs in addition to its generally red fall foliage. It is the most abundant tree in eastern North America. Also called Swamp Maple, Red Maples can grow in wet areas such as the area in which you are standing. They are fire intolerant and have thrived in an era of fire suppression. The red flowers of Red Maples bloom in February and March and attract early-flying native bees.

Continue straight on the orange-blazed trail.

8. **Virginia Pine** (*Pinus virginiana*) Native. This evergreen can be identified by its relatively short needles that are twisted and come in bunches of two. Think of the needles as forming a V for Virginia. An important tree for lumber, the Virginia Pine is the larval host for many butterflies and moths including the Eastern Tailed Blue, Clouded Sulfur, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, and Luna & Promethea moths. Its seeds and sap are eaten by many birds including Brown Creepers, Chickadees, Nuthatches, Warblers, and Wild Turkeys. Note the beautiful bark and moss on this tree.
9. **Northern Red Oak** (*Quercus rubra*) Native. The Red Oak is a host plant for the Banded Hairstreak, Edward's Hairstreak, Gray Hairstreak, White-M Hairstreak, Horace's Duskywing, and the Juvenal's Duskywing butterflies. The acorns require two growing seasons to mature and are eaten by woodpeckers, blue jays, small mammals, wild turkeys, deer, and black bears. Red Oaks may start to bear acorns at 20-25 year, but may reach 40 years of age before producing acorns in abundance.
10. **Oak** (*Quercus* sp.) Native. Oaks are divided into two broad categories: White Oaks and Red Oaks. White oaks have leaves with rounded lobes and red oaks have lobes with sharp points. Can you determine what kind this tree has? This particular tree has four large, live trunks that indicate that this tree was logged in its past. The tree sprouted from its roots and developed these multiple trunks. There are many large trees here in Doves Landing that exhibit this characteristic. It is believed that this area was last logged in the 1930s. White Oak (*Quercus alba*) was the VNPS [Wildflower of the Year](#) for 2011.

Notice the tiny sprout of poison ivy behind the pink sign. To read about poison ivy, see #13.

11. **Japanese Barberry** (*Berberis thunbergii*) Nonnative. This is a small specimen of an invasive thorny shrub that is native to Japan. Japanese barberry poses a significant threat to natural areas due to its popularity as a landscape shrub, ability to tolerate full shade, and the dispersal of its prolific seeds by birds. It reproduces from seeds, rhizomes, or layering. Seeds have a germination rate as high as 90%. Japanese barberry has been linked to Lyme disease. In areas with large infestations of this invasive shrub, there may be a 90% increase in Lyme-disease-carrying ticks when compared to areas with native shrubs. This is likely due to the fact that Japanese Barberry provides excellent cover for deer mice, the larval deer tick's host, and helps retain humidity, making it an ideal habitat for ticks. ([Western New York PRISM](#)) *Do not plant this shrub in your home garden!*
12. **Tulip Tree** (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) Native. Also known as Tulip Poplar or Yellow Poplar, this tree is one of our tallest native trees at 80-150 feet and is a member of the Magnolia family. It has spectacular spring flowers of yellow and orange, but they bloom high in the canopy after leaf-out. The seeds sit upright in pyramidal clusters, turning brown in October and persisting through winter. Tulip trees are fast-growing and need moist, but well-drained, soil. They are a larval host for 368 butterflies and moths including the Eastern Tiger (VA's state insect) and Spicebush Swallowtail butterflies and Cecropia, Luna, and Prometheus moths.
13. Over to your right is **Poison Ivy** (*Toxicodendron radicans*) Native. Don't touch! This hairy vine is best known for the human allergic reaction to its oily resin called urushiol. All parts of the plant, leaves, stems, berries, and roots, contain this oil. Identification is key because the plant can look different at different ages and stages. These rhymes help: "Leaflets three, let them be," "Longer middle stem, don't touch them," and "Hairy vine, no friend of mine." While poison ivy can be a bane to humans, it is an important wildlife plant and its leaves turn a lovely shade of red in autumn. Many birds, including woodpeckers, depend on poison ivy berries in the late fall and winter.

To the left of the large tree trunk is a small native plant, **Spotted/Stripped Wintergreen** (*Chimaphila maculata*). In summer its nodding, fragrant, waxy, white or pinkish flowers bloom in small clusters. This evergreen plant was used by Native Americans by steeping leaves and roots for infusions to drink or apply topically; its use treated pain, urinary infections, fever, rheumatism and other maladies.

Cross the bridge and go uphill. Along the way, you will see lots of Partridge-berry (#3) and Running-Cedar (some with spore-bearing strobili)(#4).

14. **Downy Rattlesnake Plantains** (*Goodyera pubescens*) Native. These orchids have beautifully detailed leaves that stay green year around. As is typical of orchids, the roots have a symbiotic relationship with mycorrhizal fungi that assists the plant in the acquisition of moisture and nutrients, while the plant provides products of its photosynthesis to feed the fungus. Flowers are pollinated by bumblebees and other native bee species. Pollination often has a high rate of success, and many flowers produce mature fruits. Also typical of orchids, the seeds of this species are minute and dust-like, bearing few nutrients to assist in the establishment of new seedlings. Seedling establishment requires assistance from soil fungi, from which the orchid derives the organic molecules it needs until it can make its own food via photosynthesis in its leaves. This plant was the VNPS [Wildflower of the Year](#) in 2016.
15. **Wintercreeper** (*Euonymus fortunei*) Nonnative. This tiny specimen may look harmless, but it will grow into a highly invasive vine. Native to East Asia, this vigorous vine invades forest openings and margins. It grows across the ground, displacing native plants and seedlings and, like English Ivy, climbs trees high into the tree canopy by clinging to the bark. Forest openings, caused by wind, insects, or fire, are

especially vulnerable to invasion. If you continue the walk along the Occoquan River, you may notice some tall trees along the trail that have been subsumed by this invader.

Stay on the orange-blazed trail to the right.

16. **Beechdrops** (*Epifagus virginiana*) Native. Beechdrops are a hemiparasitic plant with unbranched to many-branched, brownish-tan stems and buff-brown or dull magenta flowers in axils of scattered dry scales. As the genus name, from the Greek epi (upon) and phagos (beech) implies, this annual plant is found under Beech trees (See #5), where it grows on and receives nourishment from a fungus that feeds on the beech tree roots. The flowers are delicately marked and worth a close-up look with a hand lens (or look through the large end of a pair of binoculars). Tread carefully! Dried stalks often persist all winter under the trees. Beechdrops are common and found throughout Virginia. With their light color, they can be a challenge to see amongst the leaf litter.

Turn right to stay on the orange trail, then left at the orange-blazed pine tree.

17. **Ebony Spleenwort** (*Asplenium platyneuron*) Native. Similar, but smaller than Christmas Ferns (#2), they both have fertile fronds that die off in the winter, are darker green, and stand upright. Their sterile fronds are evergreen and generally lie flat on the ground. In contrast to Christmas Fern, **Ebony Spleenwort** has a shiny, dark reddish-brown stem and the sori (the yellowish or brownish mass on the edge or underside of a fertile frond) are linear, alternately arranged along the mid-vein.
18. **Rattlesnake Fern** (*Botrypus virginianus*) Native. This fern prefers moist, rich woods and shade, and it is one of first ferns to begin growth in spring. The tapered tip of the fertile blade is said to resemble a rattlesnake tail. It is found throughout Virginia and North America.

Turn left at HOA trail. You may hear roosters crowing across the creek.

19. **Pawpaw** Patch (*Asimina triloba*) Native. This understory tree with long leaves forms patches with its roots. It produces our largest native fruit, the pawpaw, that some people describe as a combination between a mango and a banana with a custard-like consistency. George Washington enjoyed chilled pawpaws as a late summer dessert. These trees in this patch did not produce fruits this fall, but other specimens along the Occoquan River may have some. Pawpaws are the larval host plant for the beautiful Zebra Swallowtail butterfly.
20. **Wild Ginger** (*Asarum canadense*) Native. This lovely three-season groundcover has unusual-looking brownish flowers that are hidden under its leaves in the spring. It is an alternate larval host for the Pipevine Swallowtail butterfly and it is a nectar source for flies and beetles. True gingers, aromatic plants from tropical countries, are not closely related to *Asarum*. Wild Ginger makes an excellent ground cover in the woodland garden and is available from many native plant nurseries. *Do not dig it from the wild*. Wild Ginger was the VNPS [Wildflower of the Year](#) for 2010.

Continue along the Occoquan River for a while, then retrace your steps unless you are familiar with the trails at Doves Landing Park.

Note: If you visit by late September or early October, you may see a number of blooming plants, especially near Broad Run or along the Occoquan River:

Two fall-bloomers that are white are **White Wood Aster** (*Eurybia divaricata*) and **White Snakeroot** (*Ageratina altissima*). White Wood Asters bloom in the shade and may be found along the trail. White Snakeroot may be blooming near Broad Run as it joins Cedar Run to form the Occoquan River.

Wingstem (*Verbesia alternifolia*) and **Crownbeard** (*Verbesina occidentalis*) are two natives with yellow flowers that may be in bloom. These plants have special value to honeybees and bumblebees. Both species are tall and have "wings" (vertical ridges) along the stem. One way to tell them apart is by looking at the leaf arrangement - Crownbeard has opposite leaves; Wingstem has alternate leaves.

Doves Landing Park was officially dedicated on September 26, 2015, as a Prince William County Park.



Prince William Wildflower Society, a chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society
www.vnps.org

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