

MARCH-APRIL 1984

WILD NEWS

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY, A Chapter of the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society

MARCH MEETING:

WILDFLOWER SLIDE PROGRAM

TUESDAY, MARCH 20 7:30 PM MANASSAS BATTLEFIELD PARK HDQTRS.



To get us out of the winter doldrums and in the mood for spring, Melvin Thompson, Great Falls Park volunteer naturalist and photographer, will share his wildflower slides with us.

Melvin is a life-time resident of Great Falls and is a leader for Sunday morning wildflower walks at the Park. He has given slide presentations for many groups in Northern Virginia. One of his photographs of the Falls has been made into a postcard by the National Park Service.

Please note a change from our usual meeting day and place. We're meeting on Tuesday, the 20th, at the Manassas Battlefield Park headquarters building which is located at the main Park entrance off Sudley Rd. (Rt. 234, N.). For further information, directions or a ride, call Nancy Arrington at 368-8431 or Elaine Haug, 670-2347, or look through your membership directory for a member you can carpool with. Let's greet spring with a super turnout for the meeting!

EDUCATION COMMITTEE PLANS SCHOOL PROJECT



Education Committee chairman Nicky Staunton is coordinating a very important education and conservation project with the local high school biology departments. The project is designed to help students become better acquainted with county wildflowers and to become more aware of the need to preserve and protect our native plants in their natural habitats.

Nicky's plans include a wildflower slide program for the students, distribution of our conservation folder, copies of two wildflower guides for each high school biology department, and suggestions for student projects such as propagation and photography to lessen the wildflower collecting.

PLANT RESCUES

Several plant rescues are scheduled for this spring. Dates are listed on the calendar, though some locations will be announced later. Call Marie Davis, Rescue Chairman, if you can participate in any of the rescues, 361-1626.

RARE WILDFLOWER HUNT

To help ourselves become better acquainted with Leesylvania State Park, our Chapter is sponsoring a Rare Wildflower Hunt at the park. Prizes will be awarded for the rarest monocotyledon, the rarest dicotyledon, as well as to the person finding the most county records. Dr. Ted Bradley of George Mason University will be our authority on the hunt.

The hunt will take place on Saturday, April 28 at 9:30 a.m. Meet at the Pilot House Restaurant parking lot on Neabsco Rd. (Rt. 610) east of Rt. 1. The hunt is open to all VWPS members and their guests. This is a great opportunity for amateur botanists and wildflower lovers to "do their thing". It will be a good learning experience with Dr. Bradley and other pros as guides. For more information, Call Elaine Haug at 670-2347.



WILDFLOWER-OF-THE-MONTH

See article beginning on page 3 for a wildflower that dons a fur coat for its early spring debut.



PLANT SALE

Last year's plant sale netted our chapter over \$1,000 and we hope to do as well this year. Plans are tentative at this time because the Manassas Mall's Spring Bazaar, site of last year's sale, is a month earlier this year and March 31 is too early for a plant sale. We had set the date for May 4, 5, & 6, but now that we're looking for a location the date may also change. The sale at Dale City on Sat. the 5th of May will not likely change.

At any rate, we will have a plant sale somewhere, sometime this spring. Anna Cousins is chairman of the sale and she's expecting a lot of help from our members. If you have pots, flats, grocery bags, etc. you can donate, bring them to the March meeting or continue to collect them and get them to Anna later.

Also begin to make a list of plants you can donate. We're looking for hardy, easily cultivated wildflowers, ferns, shrubs, and small trees. If part of your "yard" consists of a natural woodland with an abundance of common plants such as mayapples, violets and sensitive ferns, please feel free to share. But be extremely conservation-conscious and do not deplete your own supply of plants and never dig rare plants such as orchids. If you are in doubt consult our conservation guide or call Nancy Arrington.

Plants should be potted up 2-3 weeks before the sale (assume date to be around May 5) to give roots a chance to begin growing again so material will transplant well when the buyer gets it home.

If you can supply plants but cannot get them potted, call Anna at 791-6542 and we'll get them potted. Also call Anna if you can help in any other way — publicity, working at the sale, potting plants, etc.

ALSO — call Anna or come to the March 20 meeting with any suggestions or ideas you have for a location for the sale in the Manassas area.

VWPS MEMBERSHIP FOLDER

A new VWPS membership brochure has just been printed. We have around 300 copies to distribute. We need to get them into literature racks in libraries, parks, and other places where they're likely to be picked up by prospective members. Call Nancy Arrington, 368-8431, if you can help with distribution. If you'd like one mailed to a friend or someone you think might join, call Membership Chairman Roxetta Wyer, 361-8615.

PWFP DISPLAY GARDEN

The garden, with about half the planned material put in last fall, survived the winter in good shape. Chairman Marie Davis reports that hepatica is blooming now. She and Elaine Haug added pipsissewa, spotted wintergreen and pussytoes rescued from the new county park at Nokesville.

Marie has compiled a list of plants needed for the garden. Chapter members will receive the list with their VWPS Spring Bulletin.

A busy work schedule is planned for this spring to get the garden ready for the May 20th grand opening. Marie will be working many weekdays in addition to the two "formal" workdays she has scheduled: Saturdays, March 31 and April 21, 10:00 a.m. Call her at 361-1626 if you can help. This is a good opportunity to learn wildflower gardening from Marie who is an expert gardener.

Our grand opening will be a "really big deal". We need committee persons for publicity, invitations, program, refreshments, etc. Call Marie if you can help in one of these areas.

The garden, which will be seen by park visitors from all over the world, is an important education and conservation project for our chapter. Your help and participation will make it the very best.



POTOWMACK CHAPTER SCHEDULES PLANT SALE

Potowmack Chapter's plant sale will be May 13 at Green Spring Farm Park. Again this year the sale will be part of the Park's Mother's Day Garden Party.

LOCAL WILDFLOWER CHECKLISTS

A checklist of Prince William County Wildflowers listed by families with both botanical and common names has been compiled by Elaine Haug. Marie Davis is now typing the list which will be printed in an attractive booklet form in time for distribution this spring.

In addition to the list of plants we know grow in the county, Elaine is working on a list of plants not recorded for Prince William County but known to exist in at least one adjacent county. These are plants we need to press for our own county records, and the list will be ready in time for our Rare Wildflower Hunt at Leesylvania State Park.

HEPATICA

Hepatica americana

MARION BLOIS

Ass't. Professor of Biology, NVCC



Hepatica, or liverwort, is one of the earliest signs of spring. Only skunk cabbage, harbinger-of-spring and a few undramatic mustards bloom before hepatica. Its lovely white, pink, or lavender flowers may begin unfurling from fuzzy buds in late February in protected spots and other stands may continue blooming into April. Hepatica's natural range is in deciduous woods from southeastern Canada down to northern Florida and west to Iowa and Missouri. This delicate member of the Ranunculaceae (buttercup or crowfoot) family is often found in protected areas sheltered by a tree trunk or a rock on a sunny hillside. The fibrous root system allows hepatica to thrive on shallow soils and to withstand summer droughts.

Hepatica americana, the more common round-lobed species in our area, can withstand fairly acidic soil conditions whereas the less common sharp-lobed *Hepatica acutiloba* prefers less acidic soil. Sharp-lobed hepatica is more common in counties to the west of us, but most likely there are some limited stands in Prince William County.

Hepatica, also known as liverwort or liverleaf, gets both its genus name which is derived from a Greek word for liver, and its common names from the liver-like shape of its trilobed leaves. Unlike most other deciduous woods spring wildflowers, the leaves of hepatica persist throughout the year. They become thicker and more mottled (or even solid reddish-purple) over the course of the year. These older leaves, admittedly a bit bedraggled after a rough winter, are present at blooming time but wither away as new leaves appear.

The plant hairs or "fuzz" that covers the unfurling young leaves as well as the stems and flower buds is found only on the undersides of the mature leaf. In a very picturesque description, Neltje Blanchan, in her 1923 book, *Wildflowers Worth Knowing*, wrote "... even under the snow itself bravely blooms the delicate

hepatica, wrapped in fuzzy furs as if to protect its stems and nodding buds from cold."

The 1/2 to 3/4" solitary flowers develop from 4-6" tall scapes or flowering stems. The 5-12 (usually 5 or 6) variously colored "petals" are not what they seem at first glance. These "petals" are actually a calyx of sepals — there are no petals! To further frustrate a beginning botanist or wildflower enthusiast, the three small green appendages behind the colored calyx are not sepals but are leaves or bracts. The stamens are what they seem and are quite numerous as are the pistils (or carpels). Both stamens and carpels are arranged in a spiral pattern characteristic of the buttercup family. The variation in calyx color is probably due to a combination of genetic variations and soil acidity differences.

Individual hepatica flowers may or may not have a delicate fragrance reminiscent of sweet violets. They are pollinated by various wild bees or flies. Following fertilization, each carpel develops into a slender fruit called an achene. Attached to each seed is a fat saturated body called an elaiosome. Ants are attracted to the elaiosome; they drag the seed away, eat the elaiosome and leave the seed intact. This explains a solitary clump of hepaticas growing in a notch of an old tree trunk or in the crevice of a rock. Some researchers believe that ants disperse the seeds of up to 30% of eastern deciduous woods spring wildflower species. This phenomenon known as "myrmecochry" not only removes the seeds from direct competition with the parent plants but also away from predation by rodents or other insects.

In Europe other species of this genus were used to treat liver ailments based on the idea of the "doctrine of signatures" proposed by herbalists in the 1500's. According to this idea, plant parts resembling an afflicted human part or organ could be used to treat that ailment. A tannin extract of the leaves, which resemble the lobes of a liver, was used to treat liver ailments. Such treatment persisted in Europe and in America into the last century.

Hepatica is no longer used to treat liver ailments, however, the first sighting of its exquisitely delicate flowers is an excellent "spring tonic" for the winter blahs and an assurance that spring cannot be far away!

CULTIVATION AND PROPAGATION

Nancy Arrington

Hepatica is a long-lived, hardy perennial which, according to Taylor and Hamblin in *Handbook of Wild Flower Cultivation*, "... should be in every spring wild garden."

Continued on pg. 4

Its cultural requirements are few: spring sun, summer shade, a well-drained slightly acid woody soil. If your soil isn't "woody" addition of peat moss, compost, or rotted manure will help. A mulch of pine needles or shredded leaves will conserve moisture in summer and add to soil acidity.

For maximum enjoyment of hepatica's very early spring flowers plant it close to the house near a walkway or patio where you will see it without having to trek to a distant bed. Since the foliage stays pretty through the summer and fall it makes a superior ground cover when grown in large colonies. Or duplicate mother nature's (via ants) haphazard placement by planting individual clumps among ferns, violets, and other spring wildflowers. A clump of hepatica growing at the base of a tree or beside a rock is a most attractive woodland sight and one you can duplicate in the garden. Since the early spring landscape is very bare, hepatica (and other early bloomers including crocus) look better against backgrounds mentioned above or against evergreens.

Hepatica can be divided after blooming. Watch maturing seed carefully and collect when ripe but before the elaiosome dries up (and before the ants get them!) Seed should be sown immediately in flats or prepared beds. The plant will multiply on its own by dropping seeds near the parent plant. Seedlings can then be moved to other locations.



COMING ATTRACTIONS

May Membership Meeting –
Gypsy Moth Program

July Membership Meeting –
Butterfly Gardening

ANNA SAPP PRESENTS PROGRAM

An Animal Rehabilitation Clinic will be held at the Nature Center, Prince William Forest Park, Triangle, at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 31.

Wildflower Society member Anna Sapp who is a licensed wildlife rehabilitator will share her knowledge and views on the care of injured or orphaned animals.

Ben Lewis from the Virginia Fish and Game Commission will present information about the law and how to become a licensed wildlife handler. (From Park's newsletter, "Turkey Caller")

SPRING WILDFLOWER CLASSES

"Regional Flora", Marion Blois' popular wildflower course, is being offered by NVCC again this spring. The 10-week, 3-credit course meets Tuesdays, 6:00-7:50 p.m. at the Manassas Campus beginning Apr. 3. Field trips are scheduled for six weekends during the course. Call the college for registration information, 368-0184.

Again this spring Marion will teach a class for the Smithsonian's Resident Associate Program. The course, "Spring Wildflowers of the Virginia and Maryland Woods", consisting of four lectures and three field trips, will meet on Thursdays, 6:00-7:20 p.m. at the Museum of Natural History, beginning April 12. For information call the Smithsonian Resident Associates at 202-357-3030.

Also, Marion will lead two bus tours of the National Arboretum for the Smithsonian Residents Associate Program. Tours are scheduled for Saturday, April 21, and Sunday, May 6, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. For more information call the Smithsonian Residents at the above number, or Marion at the college, Ext. 211.

COSTAL WILDFLOWERS

Diane Lewis, Potowmack Chapter member and noted lecturer, will present a slide program "Wildflowers of Costal Wetlands, Marshes and Stream Banks" on March 30, 10:00 a.m., Dolley Madison Library, McLean. The program will be especially interesting to persons attending the VWPS sponsored trip to the Chickahominy area the following weekend. For more information call Dorna Kreitz, 938-6248.

ED MILHOUS WRITES ARTICLE

"Making A Meadow", feature article of *The Virginia Gardener*, VPI Dept. of Horticulture's March newsletter, is written by PWWS member and County Extension Agent, Ed Milhous.

We'll have this newsletter along with other publications at our March meeting. If you'd like to subscribe send \$3.00 payable to Treasurer-Va. Tech University, to the Virginia Gardener, Va. Tech Ext. Div., 112 Landsdowne St., Blacksburg, Va. 24060.

The Prince William Extension Service also puts out a newsletter, *The Prince William Gardener*, which is free to county residents. Wildflower Society member Marie Balboni is volunteer editor. Call the Extension office, 369-9262, and ask to be put on the mailing list.



SPRING CALENDAR

Before attending an event, please call one of the following members to be sure the event is still as scheduled in the calendar: Elaine Haug - 670-2347, Nancy Arrington - 368-8431, Marie Davis - 361-1626.

- March 20 - PWWS Chapter meeting, 7:30 p.m., Manassas Battlefield Park Hdqtrs., Sudley Rd., Manassas
- March 31 - Workday, 10:00 a.m., Display Garden, Prince William Forest Park, Triangle
- April 14 - Plant Rescue, 10:00 a.m., Riverview Estates
- April 15 - Wildflower Walk, 1:30 p.m., Conway Robinson Memorial Forest, Gainesville
- April 21 - Workday, 10:00 a.m., Display Garden, Prince William Forest Park, Triangle
- April 28 - Rare Wildflower Hunt, 9:30 a.m., Leesylvania State Park (meet at Pilot House Restaurant parking lot, Neabsco Rd., Rt. 610, east of Rt. 1)
- May 5 - TENTATIVE DATE - Plant Sale, 9:30 a.m., Dale City Firehouse & Manassas Location TBA
- May 12 - Plant Rescue, 10:00 a.m., location TBA
- May 13 - Wildflower Walk, 1:30 p.m., Conway Robinson Memorial Forest, Gainesville
- May 20 - Grand Opening, Display Garden, 2:00 p.m., Prince William Forest Park, Triangle
- May 22 - PWWS Chapter meeting, 7:30 p.m., place TBA
- May 26 - Plant Rescue, 10:00 a.m., place TBA
- June 2 - Workday, 9:00 a.m., Conway Robinson Memorial Forest
- June 3 - PWWS Family Picnic, 1:00 p.m. with Wildflower Walk at 3:00 p.m., Conway Robinson Memorial Forest, meet at picnic shelter

**NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO JOIN THE WILDFLOWER SOCIETY - PASS THE FORM
ALONG TO A FRIEND OR GIVE A FRIEND A GIFT MEMBERSHIP**



Prince William Wildflower Society
A CHAPTER OF THE
Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name(s) _____ Date _____

Address _____

Phone(s): Home (____) _____ Work (____) _____

Membership and fiscal year is Nov. 1 - Oct. 31 and dues are renewable by Oct. 15 each year. Dues submitted during September and October will apply toward membership for the coming full membership & fiscal year.

Please check membership category:

☐ Student/Senior 5.00 ☐ Individual 7.50 ☐ Family 10.00 ☐ Patron 20.00 ☐ Associate (group) 25.

Gift Membership. Your Name: _____

Greeting: _____

Make check payable to V.W.P.S. and mail to: Roxetta Wyer, Membership Chairman, 9125 Peebody St., Manassas, Va. 22110.

BEEKEEPER'S SMART COURSE

If you like honey, enjoy interesting projects, are looking for easy agriculture, and want a great educational experience, beekeeping is just the hobby for you, no matter where you live.

A beginning course in beekeeping will be held March 29, 30, and 31, at NVCC's Manassas Campus. It will be presented in evening sessions on Thursday and Friday, 7:00-10:00 p.m., and on Saturday starting at 9:00 a.m. and concluding at 2:00 p.m. following field demonstrations.

The course is sponsored by Virginia Extension Service offices in association with the three area beekeeper organizations.

Family tuition of \$12.50 includes a packet of materials, with a special 170-page reference text, and a one-year membership in the beekeeper organization in your area.

Advance register to Smart Course, P.O. Box 1952, Manassas, Va. 22110 or register at the door any time during the course schedule. For more info call the Extension office at 369-9262.

PARK AUTHORITY PUBLIC HEARINGS

Prince William County Park Authority has scheduled public hearings to get feedback from the community about recreational facilities wanted. These are good opportunities for our members individually or as a group to ask for nature trails in the parks. Meetings are scheduled for every two weeks through August. We will print the rest of the schedule in our next newsletter. All meetings are 7:30 pm.

March 29 - Evergreen Fire House

April 11 - Birchdale Recreation Area (Dale City Civic Center)

April 25 - Ben Lomond Community Center

May 9 - Coles Fire House

May 23 - Nokesville Elementary School

MARCH MEETING

Tuesday, March 20, 7:30 p.m.
Manassas National Battlefield
Park Headquarters Building
(Details page 1)



PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY
A CHAPTER OF THE
Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society
P.O. BOX 83, MANASSAS, VA 22110



HEPATICA
Hepatica americana