

MAY-JUNE 1984

WILD NEWS

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

MAY MEETING

JOIN THE GYPSY MOTH FIGHT

TUESDAY, MAY 22, 7:30 P.M., 10625 PROVINCIAL DR., APT. D

Since you have read and heard about gypsy moths for the past two or three years and have yet to see one, you may think they really aren't coming. Such is not the case. They are already in Prince William County and more are on the way.

County Extension Agent Ed Milhous will bring his gypsy moth program to our May meeting. If you have even a single tree in your yard this program is for you. Though there is no known way to stop the gypsies there are control measures which Ed will discuss.



WILDFLOWER-OF-THE-MONTH

Meet a lovely parent of modern hybrid azaleas. Details inside.

If you can't come to the meeting, but think you have gypsy moths, call the extension office, 369-9262. It is important for everyone to get involved in the fight before it becomes a problem.

Our Tuesday, May 22, 7:30 p.m. meeting will be held at the home of Marion Blois, 10625 Provincial Dr., Apt. D, Manassas. Directions: turn off Sudley Rd. (across from Leggetts in West Gate Plaza) onto Provincial Dr., beside Ponderosa. Turn left into the Crestwood Professional Center and park near the apartment complex. As you face the apartments Marion's building is on the left corner.

CHAPTER PICNIC

Our first annual Chapter picnic will be held Sunday, June 3, 1:00 p.m. at Conway Robinson Memorial Forest. Bring food for your own family plus a little to share. Society will furnish soft drinks and iced tea. A walk, open to the public, will follow at 3:00. For directions, more info, etc. call Jean Chitren at 221-4489.

You are cordially invited . . . AND URGED TO ATTEND . . .

WILDFLOWER GARDEN DEDICATION SUNDAY, MAY 20, 2:00 P.M. PRINCE WILLIAM FOREST PARK

The dedication ceremony for our wildflower garden at Prince William Forest Park's Nature Center promises to be a really nice affair.

In addition to our own membership, invitations were sent to National Park Service staff members, the VWPS Board of Directors, county supervisors and local mayors, college and high school biology teachers, and others.

Marie Davis and mother nature have been working day and night (Marie has only worked days) to make the garden beautiful. Ranger Fred Doyle has gotten labels for the plants ("Just like the ones at the arboretum", according to Marie). He and other Park staffers have been very cooperative and are as excited as we

are about the garden. Local press people have been invited to cover the affair. A program is being printed, refreshments will be served, and a walk will follow the dedication.

And now it's your turn — SHOW UP!! If you can make cookies that will help too. Call Nicky Staunton, 368-3943 (w), 368-9803 (h) and let her know what you can bring.

A lot of people have put a lot of time and thought and work into this project and they deserve the support of our membership.

If you need a ride call Nicky at the above numbers or Nancy Arrington, 368-8431.

DUES INCREASE

At its April meeting the VWPS Board of Directors voted to increase dues for the coming fiscal year. The following dues schedule will be effective Nov. 1, 1984:

Student/Senior	\$ 5.00
Individual	10.00
Family	15.00
Patron	25.00
Associate (groups)	25.00
Supporting	50.00
Sustaining	100.00
Corporate Sponsor	125.00
Life	250.00

A 50/50 dues apportionment (a change from the present one-third state/two-thirds chapter) was approved and will become effective Nov. 1, 1984.

The dues increase is necessary if the Society is to grow and attain the goals set by the Board. Expenses associated with the formation of new chapters and maintenance of existing chapters has already exceeded budget allocations for the entire year. Though the budget was very carefully planned and each expenditure is closely scrutinized, other budget allocations are almost depleted.

Services the Society provides or will provide to its Chapters and membership include:

1. The VWPS Administrative Handbook, now nearing completion, will include copies of all relevant legal documents, guidelines for chapter development and activities, and copies of forms and procedures required to meet Society or government obligations.
2. Liability insurance for member activities at the Society and Chapter levels and bonding of chapter officers in charge of financial matters.
3. The *Bulletin*, which is the Society newsletter, costs approximately \$600 to produce and mail.
4. The Society pays for servicing at-large members.

The following is from a letter from Linda McMahan, 1st Vice President, VWPS, announcing the dues increase:

"... we are looking for ways to increase communication between the Board and the VWPS membership and how to increase participation of the membership in decisions about the goals and activities of the Society as a whole. In the June membership mailing, the Society will make the first of many attempts to increase awareness of decisions of the VWPS Board, and of the activities of the chapters. We are looking seriously at the possibility of increasing the number of times *The Bulletin* is printed and mailed to members. We hope to establish a committee to look into long-term goals for the Society; if the committee is

RENEWED INTEREST AT CRMF

We've had two well-attended walks at Conway Robinson and the spring wildflowers have been beautiful.

The Virginia Forestry Service which administers CRMF held a meeting recently to find out what members of the local community want done with the forest. Jean Chitren attended for the Wildflower Society along with local elected officials, community leaders, and neighbors.

A second meeting will be held later and in the meantime the Forestry Service will consider any and all suggestions. Direct your comments to Jean Chitren 221-4489.

We could use the forest for more walks and educational activities, as a repository for rescued plants, and as demonstration woodland and meadow gardens. However, the lack of a full-time ranger at the Forest discourages our members' participation.

SECOND SUCCESSFUL SALE

Our second annual plant sale netted over \$500. Many thanks to everyone who donated plants, pots, flats, etc. and to all who potted plants, worked at the sale and helped in other ways.

Some of the best-sellers that we need to start propagating now are: bleeding heart, columbine, dwarf crested iris, cardinal flower, yellow & white violets, woodland phlox, and orange daylilies.

If you can provide garden space and tender loving care for plants we're getting ready for next year, please let Marie Davis know, 361-1626.

PLANT RESCUE

A plant rescue is planned for 10 a.m., Saturday, May 26 with place to be announced. This will be an excellent opportunity to add plants to your own wildflower garden. Call Marie, 361-1626 if you can participate.

formed, I would hope that members not now serving on the Board would agree to serve on that special committee. We will probably include some presentation on the long-term possibilities of the Society at our next annual meeting, with plenty of time for discussion and suggestion. I know that I speak for the entire Board of Directors in asking the chapters to comment on these ideas and to suggest some others."

Marion Blois and Nancy Arrington are our Chapter's members of the VWPS Board of Directors — they will be happy to take your comments and suggestions to the May 31st meeting.

WILDFLOWER-OF-THE-MONTH



PINXTER- FLOWER

Rhododendron nudiflorum

MARION BLOIS
Ass't. Professor of Biology, NVCC

The crimson pink through all shades of delicate rosy pink to almost white of our lovely native pinxter-flower azalea rivals the beauty of cultivated species. From late April through much of May the 2-6' deciduous shrub, *Rhododendron nudiflorum*, provides a colorful display in deciduous woods. This is our area's most abundant azalea occurring from Maine to Illinois and southward to the Gulf.

Like other members of the heath (Ericaceae) family such as blueberries, mountain laurel, and rhododendron, pinxter-flower prefers acid soil. It grows in rather dry woodlands, flowering sparingly in the shade and more abundantly in sunny clearings or at the forest edge.

The name pinxter-flower was given by the Dutch who settled in this country. Pinxter is the Dutch word for Whitsunday, the 7th Sunday after Easter. On this occasion they decorated their homes with these native flowers and they eventually became known as pinxter-flowers. Other common names include wild honeysuckle (due to its resemblance to honeysuckle flowers), May flower (based on the blooming date), pink azalea, and swamp pink.

Flowers are arranged in clusters at the tips of flower bearing twigs. The five-parted calyx is quite small with a narrow funnel-shaped five-parted corolla tube roughly one inch long then flaring into five petals. Five long red stamens protrude dramatically from the corolla tube. The pistil is the same length as the stamens and may be mistaken for a stamen. Flowers are sticky to the touch. As for fragrance, personal preference will decide whether or not it is pleasant. The fruit is a woody capsule containing numerous minute seeds. Capsules from last year's flowers persist until the next blooming season.

There are no known medicinal uses for pinxter-flower or for any other azaleas. This is for good reason since all parts are poisonous. Even honey made from azalea nectar can be poisonous. There is a written account of Greek soldiers being poisoned around 400 BC when they ate honey made from nectar of the Pontic azalea, a native European species.

The botanical term, "nudiflorum" refers to the appearance of flowers before the plant leaves out. The

name "azalea" is actually a misnomer since it means "dry." One of the two azaleas examined by Linnaeus was received with the comment that it was found in a dry habitat. Linnaeus mistakenly assumed that all these shrubs grew in dry areas and gave them the Greek word for dry. He placed azaleas and rhododendrons in separate genera; however, later taxonomists combined the two into a single genus, *Rhododendron*. In common language the term "azalea" is used to describe members of this genus that are deciduous or semi-evergreen with small leaves, whereas "rhododendron" is used to describe evergreen species with large leathery leaves.

The Atlas of the Flora of Virginia shows that Prince William County also has the smooth azalea (*Rhododendron arborescens*) and the swamp azalea (*R. viscosum*). The single species of rhododendron in Prince William is *R. maximum*, the rosebay.

Early botanists were much taken with our native azaleas and sent plants and seeds to Britain and Europe in the early 17th century. The pinxter, flower, along with swamp and flame azaleas, and the Pontic azalea were used in the development of the Ghent hybrid azaleas.

Today there is an almost unbelievable number of cultivated azalea hybrids, species, and varieties. But for the purists among us there are still the wild species in the woods — graceful, beautiful, and fragrant — without the "help" of plant breeders.

CULTIVATION AND PROPAGATION

Nancy Arrington

Our native azaleas are another example of the fine performance of wild plants that are brought into the cultivated garden. Given good garden soil, a little fertilizer, ample moisture, and at least half a day of sun pinxter-flower is a most attractive addition to the home landscape. Sun and judicious pruning will keep the shrub compact and more floridus than it naturally grows. However, the gardener should not interfere too much with its natural, open graceful form.

Plants growing in the wild are difficult to transplant successfully because they spread widely by underground stolens. Very small dormant plants can be moved quite successfully and larger plants will survive if cut back drastically. Pinxter-flower is on our No. 2 conservation list meaning a plant can be taken from a stand of two dozen unless it's a construction site, in which case, save all you can.

A better method of getting fairly mature plants is to order from a reputable wildflower nursery such as Woodlanders. Wayside Gardens also carries native azaleas.

Continued on next page

Pinxter-flower, continued

Since azaleas won't always "come true" from seed you will need to take stem or root cuttings to assure plants with a specific characteristic such as a more intense color. Refer to the North Carolina Botanical Garden's Propagation Handbook for instructions, or follow directions for cuttings taken from cultivated azaleas.

Propagators at the NCBG have had excellent results growing the pinxter-flower from seed, sowing on damp milled sphagnum moss. (Call me for a copy of the directions and a small supply of milled sphagnum moss which is hard to find, 368-8431.)

Superphosphate or azalea-rhododendron fertilizer can be applied to established plants after blooming for better performance next year. Water during dry spells and keep plants well-mulched with shredded leaves or bark. Our native azaleas are not bothered so much with pests of the cultivated varieties, and will prove to be long-lived hardy shrubs.

VWPS BOARD POSITIONS OPEN

Several positions on the VWPS Board will be filled at the Sept. 16 annual meeting. It is important for our Chapter to be well represented at Board meetings. Call Nancy Arrington, 368-8431, for a list of positions or to volunteer yourself or nominate someone.

NEW MEMBERS

A warm and wild welcome to new members who have joined our Chapter since publication of the VWPS Directory:

Guy and Lila Lubold
8708 Fort Dr.
Manassas, Va. 22110

Barbara Marapoti (renewal)
13401 Marie Dr.
Manassas, Va. 22111

Richard Nash
Rt. 1, Box 379
Warrenton, Va. 22186

John and Lisa Orr
9588 Covington Pl.
Manassas, Va. 22110

Quantico Officers Wives Garden Club
MCDEC
P.O. Box 129
Quantico, Va. 22134

Woodbine Woods Garden Club
c/o Harriet Martin
8075 Stillbrook Rd.
Manassas, Va. 22111



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P.O. BOX 83, MANASSAS, VA 22110



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