

WILD NEWS

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



Season's Greetings

to all our members and friends
and best wishes for a
happy and prosperous 1985.



CHRISTMAS PLANTS — HANDLE WITH CARE

MARION BLOIS
Asst. Professor of Biology, NVCC

Many of our native plants are traditionally used as Christmas decorations. Conservation and safety should be kept in mind when using these plants. Some have been overcollected such as species of clubmosses (ground pine and running cedar), Christmas fern and holly. Other plants such as holly and mistletoe produce berries that are poisonous, especially to small children.

The clubmosses (*Lycopodium* spp.) are in a family (Lycopodiaceae) of non-flowering vascular plants. The spore-producing structures called "strovili" are finger-like structures which develop on top of the individual plants and may be mistaken for a flower. This time of year many species are releasing spores from these structures. Later the spores will germinate to form the true reproductive stage of the plant.

The strovili with spores were used for old-fashioned powder-flash photography. This material, called "lycopodium powder", ignites easily producing a brilliant flash. Both *Lycopodium obscurum*, called ground pine because it resembles miniature pine trees, and *L. clavatum* known as running pine or cedar (individual plants are connected by rhizomes) have been collected to the point they are locally rare. The wildflower con-

Continued on page 2

RESCUE TOP PRIORITY FOR 1985

President Elaine Haug's plans for the Prince William Chapter for the coming year include a special emphasis on plant rescue. Time will be spent during the coming winter months making contacts so we'll be ready to go with shovels and trowels in the spring.

FRESHER GREENS

Soak Christmas greens in lukewarm water overnight to prolong their freshness. After soaking store in plastic bags until ready to use. Just a two hour soak will help greens stay fresh.

OFFICERS ELECTED

Officers for the coming two years elected at the Oct. Annual Meeting are:

President - Elaine Haug
Vice-president - Nicky Staunton
Secretary - Marie Davis
Treasurer - Jean Chitren

JANUARY MEETING

Mark your calendar for Monday, January 21, 7:30 p.m., Bethel Church in Manassas. We will have a slide program on Alaskan Wildflowers. Details in January Newsletter.

CHRISTMAS PLANTS, continued

ervation guide published by our chapter lists both species discussed here and advises limited collection from very abundant stands.

The Christmas fern (*Polystichum flavescens*, family Polypodiaceae) is another non-flowering plant that may be locally over-collected for Christmas decorating. This handsome evergreen fern is our most common fern. It derives its common name from the fact it is green at Christmas and also the leaflets of the compound leaf supposedly resemble a Christmas stocking or Santa in his sled with reindeer (use your imagination!). This plant is more common than clubmosses but still should be collected only if locally abundant.

The hollies (*Ilex* spp.) are sometimes over-collected resulting in damage to the tree or shrub. The hollies are in the Aquifoliaceae family, a true flowering plant family. The small, inconspicuous green flowers bloom in summer and are usually separate male and female flowers borne on separate plants (a condition known as dioecious or "two households"). The fruit is the lovely red berry (actually a "drupe") that is prized for Christmas decorating.

The most popular native holly is the American holly (*Ilex opaca*) with the shiny evergreen sharp-pointed leaves that are familiar to us all as a Christmas symbol. American holly grows to 90 feet tall with a straight trunk and lovely gray bark. In our area trees this size are seldom seen though the species does compete well in a mixed deciduous forest. Over-collecting of holly can be especially damaging to young trees. Of course, only female flower bearing trees will have berries.

The other species of holly, less frequently used in Christmas decorating, is the colorful *Ilex verticillata*, a deciduous shrub known as winterberry or black alder. Its leafless branches with whorls of red berries make a colorful addition to Christmas arrangements. Again, overcollecting may damage the individual plant. Berries from holly plants are eaten by birds which are important in dispersing seeds of these species. However, holly berries may be poisonous to humans, especially small children.

Mistletoe, the "kissing plant", so popular at Christmas has a better known reputation for toxic berries. The evergreen plant with thick, leathery green leaves and lovely white waxy berries can make small children very ill, or even be fatal if several berries are consumed. Mistletoe (*Phoradendron flavescens*, family Loranthaceae) is a strange flowering plant that is parasitic (but still photosynthetic with green leaves) in the upper limbs of deciduous trees. Birds eat the sticky berries, formed by small inconspicuous green flowers, and

GARDEN CLUB MEMBERS VIEW EXHIBIT

Education committee chairman, Nicky Staunton, arranged for the Wildflower Society to have an educational exhibit at the December meeting of two local garden clubs.

The exhibit, a variation of the one used this fall at the County Fair, included membership and conservation folders and free seed packets.



VOLUNTEER-OF-THE-YEAR

Marie Davis was selected Prince William Forest Park's "Volunteer of the Year" for her work on the wildflower garden. She put in around 500 hours planning and planting the garden and has continued to oversee the week-to-week maintenance.

Marie was honored along with volunteers from other national parks in the Washington area at a special awards banquet in October.

GOOD TURNOUT FOR WALK

Our Fall Foliage Walk at Conway Robinson Memorial Forest was attended by 15-20 people. Jean Chitren and Elaine Haug led the walk.



often disperse the seeds by wiping their beaks on the bark of tree limbs to remove the sticky seeds. In the winter, it is easy to see ball-like masses of mistletoe in the upper limbs of trees.

As the title of this article suggests, our traditional Christmas plants should be "handled with care" — by using sparingly and being aware of potentially dangerous leaves or berries. If conservation and safety are kept in mind these plants can add much to a colorful Christmas.

ENDANGERED WILDFLOWERS CALENDAR

If you haven't ordered your Endangered Wildflowers Calendar yet there's still time. The American Horticulture Society in nearby Mount Vernon fills orders very quickly and can get the calendars out in just a few days. At \$5.95 the calendars are very nice Christmas gifts.

Send orders to:

Endangered Wildflowers Calendar
American Horticulture Society
P. O. Box 0105
Mount Vernon, VA 22121



CHAPTER TO HOST ROUNDTABLE

In February our Chapter will host an Education and Fund Raiser Roundtable for the VWPS. Presidents and committee chairmen from chapters throughout the state are expected to attend and exchange ideas on projects and programs that will benefit all chapters.

The meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 23 at the Woodbridge Community College campus.

FREE SEEDS DISTRIBUTED

Over 100 packets of seeds have been mailed to members throughout the state. Most requested species were blue and red lobelia, and red and blue-white columbine.

Seeds will be available for our own members at our January 21st meeting, but if you'd like some sooner, call Nancy Arrington, 368-8431, or Marie Davis, 331-1626. Most species listed in the VWPS Fall Bulletin are still available.

LAST CHANCE TO RENEW FOR 1985. If you haven't renewed your membership, please do so now. If you have renewed, consider a gift membership for a friend.



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

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New membership Renewal

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 \$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

Gift Membership. Your Name: _____

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

COLOR CONES

For a colorful fire during the Christmas season, toss these treated pinecones into the fireplace. The recipe comes from Anna Cousins.

Materials:

Pine cones

Liquid floor wax (any brand)

Chemicals for different colors (available at most pharmacies)

copper sulphate - burns green

lithium sulphate - burns red

calcium chloride - burns orange

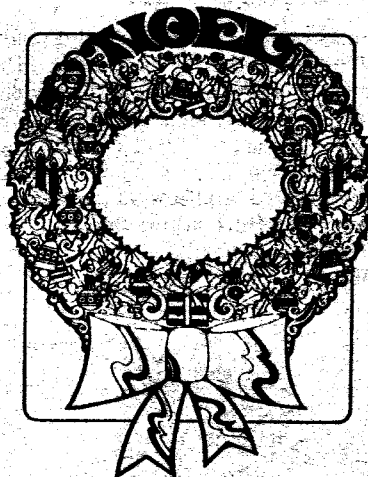
potassium chloride - burns purple

powdered sulfur (flower of sulfur) - burns blue

sodium chloride (table salt) - burns yellow

Method:

Spread newspapers on working surface. Fill a large shaker with chemicals. Pour wax into large coffee can or other container. Dip cones into wax, and let excess drip off. Stand cones upright on newspaper and sprinkle with chemicals while wax is still wet. Let dry and store in cool place until ready to use.



**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME FOR
ANYONE WHO HASN'T RENEWED
FOR 1985 - FORM ON PAGE 3.**

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