

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY, A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

## ANNUAL MEETING

### POTLUCK PICNIC & GARDEN TOUR

11:00 a.m., Sat. Sept. 16, 1989 Home of Fran & Ken Bass 12604 Valley View Dr., Nokesville

Our Annual Meeting will begin at 11:00 a.m. on Sat., Sept. 16 with registration for door prizes. Please bring a salad, or vegetable, or main dish for the potluck picnic. Beverages, bread, dessert, plates, cups, and utensils will be furnished. Also bring lawn chairs for your own family and a card table (if you have one).

Included in the short business meeting will be the president's report, 1989-90 budget approval, and election of three nominating committee members. After the business meeting we will tour the Basses' wildflower areas, wildlife habitats, and pond. Please dress casually according to the weather.

The Basses would like to caution PWWS members NOT to park close to the curve in front of their home. We'll have parking signs up along Valley View Dr. We may be able to park across the road on a neighbor's property. If you park on Valley View, park ONLY on the right-hand side since the road is narrow after the curve and their property. Board members who arrive early to help set up can park in the Basses' driveway.

Fran and Ken also request that parents be responsible for young children at all times. Their pond is quite deep and we don't want any accidents. Please keep ALL children well away from the water.

**DIRECTIONS:** From Manassas: South on Rt. 28 (Nokesville Rd.) past Manassas Airport to first traffic light. Turn left onto Rt. 619 (Bristow Rd.), cross railroad tracks at Bristow. Turn right on Rt. 611 (Valley View Dr.) and continue a couple of miles to curve in road on right, set in woods. **DO NOT PARK ON CURVE.**

**OR:** From eastern Pr. Wm. Co.: Take Rt. 234 (Dumfries Rd.) toward Manassas. Turn left onto Rt. 619 (Bristow Rd.) at Independent Hill. Go through Brentsville and turn left onto Valley View Dr.

**OR:** From the west: Take Rt. 619 (Linton Hall Rd.) off Rts. 29-211, cross Rt. 28, and continue on Rt. 619 as first set of directions.

### Fall Festival

We plan to participate in Prince William Forest Park's Fall Festival, October 14. Jenifer Bradford needs help setting up our display and hosting it during the day. Call her, 594-3422, if you can help.

### November Meeting

Our November 20th meeting, 7:30 p.m., Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, will feature a speaker from the Virginia Department of Transportation with a program on wildflower plantings for highways.

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**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL:** All memberships are due for renewal now. Please use the enclosed form and bring it to the Annual Meeting or mail it to the Society. THANKS to all who've already renewed.

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## Proposed Budget

Nov. 1, 1989 – Oct. 31, 1990

### ESTIMATED INCOME:

Dues	\$ 400.	
Plant Sale	1250.	
Book Sales	80.	
Checklist Sales	800.	
Miscellaneous	100.	\$2630

### ESTIMATED EXPENSES:

Postage	\$ 300.	
Printing	350.	
Gifts/Honorariums	100.	
Programs/Meeting Expenses	150.	
Saleable Books	80.	
Checklist Printing	800.	
Plant Sale Expenses	70.	
Taxes	100.	
Education	500.	
Wildflower Celebration '90	80.	
Miscellaneous	100.	\$2630.

## Thanks, Fair Display Volunteers

A great deal of time and effort went into our new display, "Wildflowers for Butterfly Gardens".

Nicky Staunton, Jenifer Bradford, Kathy Ehrenberger, and Val Neitzky supplied photographs and printed materials. Nancy Arrington wrote the flyer using Nicky's drawing. Bobbe Krueger supplied the butterflies (captured by her sons). Christa Kulbe dry-mounted the materials and Val provided lettering. Jenifer was overall coordinator. Tracy Johnson helped pick up some materials. Nicky and Helen Walter set up the display, Jenifer and Brad dismantled it and set it up again at the Nokesville Mini Library. Other host volunteers were Loren Staunton, Edith Lohman, Sandra Sheriff, Nancy and Heather Vehrs, Linda Dawes, Alice Garrigan, Nancy Welker, and Jeanne Endrikat who coordinated all hosts. A BIG THANK YOU to all. We truly appreciate your help in creating a very attractive and educational display.

## WILD NEWS

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President, Alden B. Bradford, 594-3422  
Editor, Nancy Arrington, 368-8431  
Artist, Nicky Staunton, 368-9803

Deadline for the Nov.-Dec. issue is Nov. 1, 1989

FROM THE 

## PRESIDENT

ALDEN B. BRADFORD

Someone is turning the sun off earlier and earlier these days so I can't be out cutting grass until 9:00 p.m. any more. The Summer is almost over and we've hardly had a chance to enjoy it. On the other hand, the subtle transition toward Fall is heralded by goldenrod and tickseed-sunflowers along the roadsides while swamp mallow, ironweed, and jewelweed are thriving in the damp and marshy areas. Added to this color are fields embellished with rudbeckia, spotted knapweed, and thistle. The transition is impressive.

Our display at the County Fair on "Wildflowers for Butterfly Gardens" was very colorful and a real eye-catcher. I want to thank you all for making it such a success: from those who created the display to those who hosted it. In particular I want to thank Nicky Staunton who "pinch hit" for Tracy Johnson (who was suddenly hospitalized) and helped Helen Walter set up the exhibit. Jenifer and I were on vacation.

During the Fair, 34 interested people signed up to receive this issue of the newsletter. This means 34 potential new members.

The display will be well used this Fall at local libraries, the state meeting, and at Prince William fall festivals.

Do come to the PWWS Annual Meeting on the 16th and the VNPS Annual Meeting on the 23rd thru the 25th. There will be good food, good programs, and good company at both meetings.

## October Board Meeting

The October PWWS board meeting is the third Monday, October 16, 7:30 p.m. at the home of President, Brad Bradford. Meetings are open to all members. Board members, please let Brad know if you CANNOT attend.

## VNPS Annual Meeting

The weekend VNPS Annual Meeting in Reston should be a super one. Remember to send in your banquet reservation before Sept. 19. Field trip reservations should have been in before Sept. 15. Read the Fall VNPS Bulletin for full details. See you there!

# ASTERS

MARION BLOIS LOBSTEIN  
Associate Professor, Biology, NVCC

This time of year, late summer into early fall, the wildflowers we enjoy (or may not enjoy in the case of ragweed allergy sufferers) are dominated by members of the composite family Asteraceae. In Northern Virginia, there are approximately 150 species of composites that bloom from September into true autumn. Of these species, roughly one quarter are species of two genera – 18 species of goldenrods (*Solidago*) and 24 species of asters (*Aster*). In an earlier article in *Wild News*, the goldenrods were discussed. This article is an overview of the asters.

Virtually all of our aster species are perennials with alternate leaves and often, prominent basal leaves. As composites, the flower heads are made up of many separate flowers with an involucre of bracts (modified leaves) on the lower surface of the head. In *Aster* species, flower heads are made up of both petal-like ray flowers that can vary in color from white to pink to blue to purple as well as tubular disk flowers that are usually yellow but can turn purple to brown with age. All flowers of this genus are pollinated by insects such as bees, bumblebees, butterflies, moths, wasps, beetles, and even flies. The genus name is derived from a Greek word for star. Dried aster flower heads that contain fruits known as nutlets often appear star-shaped.

The difference among species of this genus are not always that distinct and identification may be complicated by hybridization between species. Still, with the help of a wildflower field guide, the challenge of identification can be satisfying. Peterson's guide to wildflowers covers 21 of the 24 species and Newcombe's guide also does a good job of covering this genus.

The basically white-flowered species (color can vary to pink to even lavender) in Northern Virginia are:

- A. divaricatus* (widely branching) – white wood aster
- A. ericoides* (Heath-like) – heath aster or Michaelmas daisy
- A. infirmus* (weak) – cornel-leaved aster
- A. lateriflorus* (with one-sided flower cluster) – calico or starved aster
- A. pilosus* (pilose or long soft hairs) – white heath aster
- A. schreberi* (named for Johann von Schreber) – Schreber's aster

*A. simplex* (simple) – panicked or tall white aster  
*A. umbellatus* (umbellate as in an umbel) – flat-top white aster

*A. vimineus* (like osier) – small white aster

The basically blue to violet-flowered species of Northern Virginia asters are:

- A. concolor* (of one color) – eastern silvery aster
- A. cordifolius* (heart-leaved) – blue wood aster
- A. dumosus* (bushy) – bushy aster (may also be white flowered)
- A. laevis* (smooth) – smooth aster
- A. linariifolius* (leaves like *Linaria*) – stiff-leaved aster
- A. macrophyllus* (large-leaved) – big leaf aster
- A. novae-angliae* (of New England) – New England aster
- A. oblongifolius* (oblong-leaved) shale barren aster
- A. patens* (spreading) – late purple aster
- A. prenanthoides* (suggesting *Prenanthes*) – crooked-stem aster
- A. puniceus* (red or purple) – purple-stem aster
- A. shortii* (named for Charles Short) – Short's aster
- A. tataricus* (Tartarian) – tartarian aster
- A. undulatus* (undulate) – wavy-leaved aster

The medicinal and culinary uses of asters have been more limited than uses of many other groups of composites. However, the young leaves of the large-leaved aster are recommended as greens in edible plant books. Various American Indian tribes did use native species of asters for a wide variety of medicinal purposes ranging from teas to dried leaf/root preparations to treat fevers, diarrhea, stomach problems, pregnancy complications, colds, wounds and abrasions, even venereal diseases. The Iroquois tribe used a preparation as a love medicine or potion. Other tribes burned dried aster flowers as incense to drive away evil spirits.

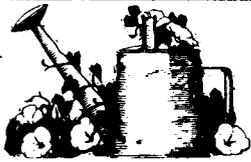
Don't blame your fall allergies on members of either of these groups which are both insect pollinated. Ragweed which is wind-pollinated is to blame for your suffering.

## Education Chair Needed

We would like to extend our good wishes to Simone Fraser, Education chair, who moved to a 10-acre mountain property filled with wildflowers near Lynchburg, Virginia, in early August. We are now looking for someone to fill her shoes. She had hoped to develop a program for children – which we badly need. We get requests for programs from parents, scout leaders, and teachers. A small education committee to develop materials and give programs is needed. Please let Brad Bradford know if this is an area you'd be willing to help with.

## NATIVES FOR THE GARDEN

NANCY ARRINGTON  
Propagation Chairman



### Hairy Ruellia

*Ruellia caroliniensis*

Hairy ruellia (*Ruellia caroliniensis*) has provided a rare treat – color – in my woodland garden the past two summers. A member of the Acanthus family, it occurs in dry woods, sandy clearings, and rock crevices from Pennsylvania and New Jersey south to Florida and Texas. It is found in most Virginia counties including Prince William and Stafford. Ruellia has been called wild petunia because its flowers resemble petunias.

Plants are 1-1½' tall with pairs of opposite 2-3" oval leaves spaced along slender stems. Lavender-blue trumpet shaped flowers about 1½" long appear in leaf axils. The lovely fragile flowers are short-lived, some wither by noon, but each plant continues to bloom over a long period of time, usually beginning in June and continuing into August.

Ruellia thrives in a variety of garden conditions but seems to grow best in a rich well-drained soil with high

open shade or morning sun. Hot mid-day sun will burn the leaves. Ruellia adapts well to dry shade but plants will bloom better with supplemental watering and a 2" mulch. Locate plants near a path or at the front of a planting area so they can be easily seen and appreciated. Ruellia is not a good foliage plant and not a good candidate for a mass planting. Rather, use individual clumps or drifts for color and softness among ferns, foam flower, green and gold, and other foliage plants. Plants sometimes tend to sprawl and sturdier companions help to support them. Ruellia emerges late in the spring so it's a good idea to mark their location.

Sow seed immediately after collection in an outdoor bed for spring germination or start indoors in late winter. Seedlings grow quickly and may bloom the first season. If you leave collected seed in a paper bag to dry out, be sure to fold down the bag top because seed pods open with a "pop" and seeds are projected with unusual force. This happens in the garden and seedlings may appear several feet from the mother plant.

Though flowers are short-lived and individual plants are not spectacular, Ruellia is easy to grow, pest-free, drought tolerant, and colorful in the summer shade garden – several good reasons to grow it. Smooth ruellia (*R. strepens*) and dwarf ruellia (*R. humilis*) are also good garden plants.

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*Ruellia caroliniensis*

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