

JAN.-FEB. 1990



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

JANUARY MEETING

Members' Slide Program

Monday, January 15, 1990, 7:30 p.m.

Bethel Lutheran Church, Sudley Rd. & Plantation Ln., Manassas

Our January program will include a look at Colorado and Texas wildflowers as well as our more familiar Virginia wildflowers. Marion Blois Lobstein will show slides from the trip she and husband George took to Colorado this past summer. Nicky Staunton will share memories of her trip to a meeting at the National Wildflower Research Center and the LBJ Ranch in Austin, Texas. Jenifer Bradford will show "Virginia Wildflower Habitats", a program compiled by VNPS Education Chair Cris Fleming which shows Virginia's wildflowers in their many and varied habitats.

Other members who have slides to share are encouraged to bring them. Everyone (including the three mentioned here) will be limited to 15-20 minutes to insure that everyone has an opportunity to show their slides and that we're not in for a three hour program!! Forget the recent ice, snow and sub-freezing weather and THINK SPRING with Monday evening's meeting.

Virginia's Rare Plants

This year's VNPS winter workshop, "Virginia's Rare Plants", will be held Saturday, March 17, 10:00 am-2:00 pm in Richmond and will include lectures, slide programs, and an outdoor workshop.

The program, open to all VNPS members and the public, will help us become more familiar with our rare, threatened, and endangered plants, and learn how we as individuals and chapters can help to conserve these plants and their habitats.

Members will receive complete information in a special mailing from VNPS. Call PWWS President Brad Bradford, 594-3422, if you'd like to car pool.

Board Meeting

Our next board meeting will be held the **second Monday, Feb. 12, 7:30 pm** at the home of President Brad Bradford. Call Brad, 594-3422, if you can't be at the meeting.

Next Meeting

The speaker for our March meeting will be Keith Hawkins, Urban Forester with the Virginia Department of Forestry. His slide program subject will be "The Social and Intrinsic Values of Trees In an Urban Environment. The meeting will be held at Bethel Lutheran Church, Monday, March 19, 7:30.

Virginia Birds

Countryside Garden Club's January 25 meeting will feature "Birds Common to Virginia, How to Identify Them, and How to Landscape to Attract Them" by a volunteer from the Audubon Society. The 7:00 pm meeting will be held at Woodbine Baptist Church, 12914 Dumfries Rd.

Propagation Workshop

A 4-hour demonstration and practice propagation workshop will be held at Blandy Thursday, March 8, 5:00-9:00 pm and repeated Saturday, March 10, 10:00 am-2:00 pm. Celia Rutt, Piedmont Chapter Propagation Chair will conduct this popular workshop. Fee, which includes a meal, is \$20 for members of Friends of the State Arboretum and \$25 for non-members. Call 703-837-1758 for more info.

Slide Projector Purchased

PWWS has purchased a slide projector and screen for use by members giving programs for the chapter. Call Jenifer Bradford, 594-3422, to use the new equipment.

Wildlife Rehabilitation

Bonnie Falk, a sanctioned wildlife rehabilitator, will present a one-hour program, "Wildlife Rehabilitation: Returning Injured or Orphaned Animals to The Wild", at Tall Oaks in Lake Ridge, Thursday, February 1 at 7:30 p.m. This family nature program is sponsored by the Prince William County Park Authority and Lake Ridge Park and Recreation Association. The program is free, but advance registration is required, 491-2183.

PWWS Spring Events

Plans for some spring activities such as wildflower walks are still being formulated and will be announced in the next newsletter. The garden tour is scheduled for April 28 and 29, and the plant sale will be May 12.

WILD NEWS

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Deadline for the Mar.-Apr. issue is March 2, 1990

FROM THE 

PRESIDENT

ALDEN B. BRADFORD

After being involved in the holiday season's swirl of activities such as dinners, gifts, trees, ice, snow, parties, and the comings and goings of friends and relatives, we arrive at the reality of this coming year, and in this case, a new decade.

To re-orient ourselves to the world of wildflowers, our first meeting will be a series of slide presentations given by Society members Nicky Staunton, Jenifer Bradford (for Cris Fleming), Marion Blois Lobstein, and any members who bring slides to share. This should definitely get us "thinking wildflowers" and remembering that the wildflower community still needs us as stewards. What a pleasant evening this will be to see flowers in full bloom on a dark January night.

The main events on our Spring 1990 calendar will be, of course, the Garden Tour and the Plant Sale. Would you like your garden on the tour? If so, talk to me at the meeting. Also, we need "lots" of member-propagated plants for the Plant Sale, so let's put this on our spring agenda.

Marion Blois Lobstein is again offering her Regional Flora course on Spring Wildflowers at the Manassas campus of NOVA. I can personally recommend the course for new members as well as old to learn what really goes on behind "that pretty face" we know as a wildflower. For more information call Marion at 368-0184, ext. 262.

Let us resolve in 1990 to spread the wildflower message of appreciation, conservation, and education. Come to the meeting on Monday night and do bring a friend.

Smokey Mountains Trip

The Audubon Naturalist Society is sponsoring a wildflower and natural history exploration of the Smokies April 18-23. The trip is planned to take advantage of peak spring bloom with a visit to a different area each day. Trip leader is Cris Fleming, Education Director of the ANS and Education Chair of the Virginia Native Plant Society. Tentative cost is \$550, double occupancy from Knoxville. For information, call Cris, office 301-652-5964 or home 301-657-9289.

Harbinger-of-Spring

Erigenia bulbosa



MARION BLOIS LOBSTEIN
Associate Professor, Biology, NVCC

One of the earliest signs of spring is the appearance of harbinger-of-spring (*Erigenia bulbosa*). This diminutive plant flowers as early as mid-February making it, along with hepatica and skunk cabbage, one of the earliest spring wildflowers to bloom. Its habitat is rich deciduous woods. This perennial member of the carrot family Apiaceae is not very common in our area and is documented only for Loudoun, Fairfax, and Arlington Counties in the **Atlas of the Virginia Flora**. Northern Virginia and the southwest counties of Virginia are the southern-most range of this species which occurs from New York state to southern Michigan and Minnesota down to Alabama and Arkansas. It is more common in West Virginia, but is found in only two counties in Maryland.

Its scientific name, *Erigenia*, is Greek for "early born" referring to its early spring appearance, and *bulbosa* means "bulbous" referring to the prominent underground blub-like storage structure that actually is a tuber. Another common name, "pepper-and-salt", refers to the appearance of the maroon to black stamens contrasted against the white petals of the flowers.

The small flowers, borne in few-flowered umbels with leafy bracts, appear before the leaves in February to early March. The individual flowers with five white petals, no obvious sepals, five maroon to black stamens, and an inferior ovary with a two-parted style are less than 3/8" in diameter. The peduncle or flowering stem is usually from 2-4" and at most 9" tall. Pollination is probably by insects such as syrphid flies, solitary bees, and other insects that are active in early spring. Fruits are schizocarps typical of the carrot family and are less than 1/8" long and about twice as wide with 5 prominent ribs on the surface and a two-parted style that persists.

The one or two leaves of each plant are two to three times divided into thirds. The finely divided and smooth leaves resemble leaves of sweet cicely (*Osmorhiza sp.*) but are not toothed and are much shorter reaching heights of under 6-9" whereas sweet cicely leaves may be up to 3' by late spring. As previously mentioned, the leaves appear after the flowers. The underground storage structure is a well-developed tuber with a fairly shallow root system.

The only medicinal or other use of harbinger-of-spring that this author can find in her reference sources is the practice of Cherokee Indians chewing the plant, probably the tuber, for toothache.

Harbinger-of-spring is rare in our Northern Virginia area and is not documented in Prince William Co. It can be found in area parks including Great Falls (Virginia and Maryland) and Balls Bluff along the Potomac River. Seeing this lovely plant emerging from underneath beech or other deciduous hardwood leaves in late February or early March is well worth a trip to one of the parks where it is found. It lives up to its name of harbinger-of-spring because once you see it you know the richness and beauty of other spring wildflowers will soon follow.

Master Gardeners

Day-time and night-time Master Gardener programs will be offered in Prince William County this winter. The day class will meet at Bethel Lutheran Church, 8712 Plantation Ln., Manassas, Mondays and Wednesdays, noon to 3 pm, beginning February 14 and ending April 16. The evening class will meet on the same days from 7:00 pm-10:00 pm at Gar-Field Senior High School, 14000 Smoketown Rd. For more information and an application form call the Extension Service, 335-6285.

Native Plant Symposium

"Native Plants: Inspiration for Garden Design" will be held on February 24, 9:00 am-4:00 pm at the National Arboretum. This year's symposium will focus on native plants from other areas that are suitable for our gardens. Subjects include northeast natives, southern shrubs, and tough prairie plants. Cost is \$45 and includes lunch. For more information and a brochure, call the Arboretum's education office, 202-475-4859. Members interested in car pooling can call Nancy Arrington, 368-8431.

NATIVES FOR THE GARDEN

NANCY ARRINGTON
Propagation Chairman



Creeping Phlox

Phlox stolonifera

Creeping phlox, *Phlox stolonifera*, native to wooded slopes from Pennsylvania to Georgia including Virginia's far western counties, is an excellent ground cover for the shade garden. A Georgia nurseryman calls it "the perennial of the 1990s" in his current price list and a North Carolina nurserywoman says, "We have never found any plant better than the stoloniferous phloxes for bringing unity to a bed. We use a different color in each of our woodland gardens and they weave between plants providing a fine ground cover with the bonus of good flowers in early spring."

Not to be confused with *P. subulata*, the rock garden phlox known as moss phlox, mountain phlox, or moss pink, creeping phlox has small spoon-shaped leaves and flowering stems that rise 6-10" above the foliage. It spreads by surface runners which root and

produce flowering shoots at frequent nodes. Foliage is evergreen in our area. Plants bloom in late April into May in a soft pinkish-lavender but a range of colors is available in the many named forms including 'Blue Ridge', 'Pink Ridge', 'Bruce's White', and 'Sherwood Purple'.

In the garden, as in its native habitat, creeping phlox prefers partial shade and a humusy, moist but well-drained moderately acid soil. After becoming established it will adapt to some summer drought. It doesn't grow well in deep shade, and, like all creeping plants, is easily killed by a deep accumulation of leaves.

Plants form a loose ground cover allowing other plants to grow through thus making it a good companion for taller ferns and wildflowers such as trilliums and Solomon's seal, and for big-leaved shade plants such as hostas and brunnera. One of its best uses is as an edging beside woodland paths where it can be appreciated up close.

Creeping phlox can be grown from seed which, like all phloxes, needs a cold moist period (stratification) for good germination. Propagation is much easier by division and cuttings. Rooted sections can be moved in spring or fall and quickly adapt to new areas. Cuttings, taken any time during the growing season, will root in a moist sand-peat mix.

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Drawing is 2x actual size

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