



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

MAY MEETING

Native Shrubs for Landscaping & Attracting Wildlife

Monday, May 21, 7:30 p.m.
Bethel Lutheran Church, Plantation Ln. & Sudley Rd.

Chris Sacchi, Curator of the State Arboretum of Virginia, will present a program on native shrubs at our May meeting. He will discuss using native shrubs in various home landscaping situations and for different purposes including attracting wildlife.

The Virginia State Arboretum, located at the Blandy Experimental Farm near Boyce, Virginia, is developing a Virginia Native Plant Collection. The goals of this new collection will be to maintain captive populations of native plants for preservation and conservation purposes, to educate the public and disseminate information about native plant species and habitats, and to demonstrate the aesthetic qualities and environmental benefits of using native plants in roadside, residential and commercial landscaping.

Come to Monday night's meeting to meet Dr. Sacchi, learn more about our state arboretum, and learn how to use native shrubs in the landscape.

THANKS TO VOLUNTEERS

Thanks to the following who served as helpers/hosts/hostesses for the garden tour: Mary Quigley-Sigl, Bill Edens, Lenore Winfield, Val Nietze, Stan Fowler, Kay Smallwood, Julie Mullins, Paul Davis, Helen Walter, Paul & Kitty Arrington, Pamela Cole, Jeanne Endrikat, Helen Winn, Kathy & Jennifer Ehrenberger, Carol North, and David Arrington. Also a special thanks to Roxetta Wyer who put in many hours helping get the Arrington garden ready.

Thanks to all members who donated plants, potted plants, transported plants, served as cashiers, and helped in any and all ways at the plant sale. Volunteers included Mary Lekander, Helen Walter, Frances Louer, Marie Davis, Nancy Arrington, Kathy, Don, & Jennifer Ehrenberger, Jeanne Endrikat and daughters, Jenifer & Brad Bradford, Mary Quigley-Sigl, Karen Weir, Lenore & Scott Winfield, Nicky Staunton, Valerie Nietze, and Jeanne Fowler.

Board Meeting

The June PWWS Board of Directors meeting is Monday, June 18, 7:30 p.m. at the home of president Brad Bradford. Let him know, 594-3422, if you won't be there. Meetings are open to all members.

Next Meeting

Our next meeting, Monday, July 16, 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church, will feature a program on Prince William County soils.

Flora Of Prince William Co. Available

"The Flora Of Prince William County" compiled by Elaine Haug and first printed in 1984 has been reprinted with slight revisions. This is a checklist of plants that have been documented as native to Prince William County. Copies are available at \$3.00. Call Elaine, 670-2347, or Jenifer Bradford, 594-3422, for copies.

Members Give Slide Program

Marie Davis and Nancy Arrington presented our "Wildflowers for Woodland Gardens" slide program to the Landscape Design Critics' Council of The National Capital Area Federation of Garden Clubs and Marie did the show for a wildflower gardening program sponsored by the Fairfax County Park Authority.

Checklist Price Correction

The price of Marion Blois Lobstein's newest checklist was incorrectly listed as \$2.00 in the last newsletter. The summer & fall wildflower checklist is \$3.00. The spring wildflower checklist and the trees, shrubs & woody vines checklist are \$2.00 each. Contact Marion, 536-7150, for copies or more info.

VNPS Patches for Sale

Our chapter has received a supply of VNPS patches which we're selling for \$4.25. The colorful patches consist of the new VNPS logo and can be sewn on a hat, jacket, tote bag, etc. They will be available at Monday's meeting or contact Jenifer, 594-3422.



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Deadline for the July-August issue is July 1, 1990.

FROM THE 

PRESIDENT

ALDEN B. BRADFORD

May is here and Spring has turned to Summer. The transition has not been gradual this year. We keep leaping from the 50's and 60's to the 80's and 90's.

Earth Day (April 22) was a beautiful day in all respects. Rev. Carol North conducted a meaningful and memorable service, the native service-berry was duly planted at the front of the church, and pine and spruce seedlings were distributed to members of the congregation. That afternoon Marion Blois Lobstein led an interesting walk at Balls Bluff where we saw several varieties of violets and shooting star among many Spring favorites.

Jenifer and I, and Nicky and Loren Staunton represented PWWS at the McCoart Building on the 28th. We prepared a special Earth Day exhibit to enter as part of the Earth Week celebration by the County. Many similar conservation/preservation groups attended and set up displays in the auditorium.

Our annual wildflower garden tour took place on the 28th and 29th after a week in the low 90's - not our typical April weather for garden visiting! Despite all, Saturday was hot, sunny, and breezy and Sunday afternoon was fine and cooler after rain showers, and once again we had a good attendance. Thank you so much, Nancy Arrington, Marie Davis, and Jeanne Fowler for a job well done. Special thanks to Helen Walter for coordinating hosts and hostesses at the gardens and to Nancy Vehrs who served refreshments both days at the Fowler garden.

Meanwhile Jenifer and I are just back from three days at our cabin. What a contrast to Prince William. Highland County is just emerging from its Winter sleep. Temperatures overnight on Saturday and Sunday were 44- and 40-degrees respectively. The sugar maples and sassafras are just getting their first leaves and dogwood are just in bloom. We found a large clump of mayapples, golden ragwort, and crabapples in our woods (in flower), and ground ivy and wild strawberries in flower in the clearing.

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Dwarf Crested Iris
Iris cristata

MARION BLOIS LOBSTEIN
Associate Professor, Biology, NVCC

One of the loveliest spring wildflowers of rich woodlands is the delicate dwarf crested iris *Iris cristata*. This diminutive member of the iris family, Iridaceae, is the most common species of *Iris* in northern Virginia. It ranges from Maryland west to Ohio and Indiana and south to Tennessee, Georgia, and Missouri. This perennial species is found primarily in piedmont and mountain areas of these states.

The scientific name *Iris* is from the Greek word for rainbow and refers to the range of colors of the variety of species, and *cristata* means "crested" referring to the raised projections on the upper surface of the petaloid sepals. Other common names are either crested iris or dwarf iris.

The flowers which are relatively small for an iris species are two and one-half to three inches across and are borne on approximately three-inch tall stems. The three blue to violet sepals are one and one-half to three inches long, resemble petals, and project downward with three prominent white or yellow ridges that form a crest in the center of each sepal. The three petals are approximately the same length but are narrower than the sepals, stand upward, and are the same color as the sepals but have no crest. The three stamens arch under the three petaloid styles that project over the stamens. The ovary of the pistil is inferior (other flower parts attach above the ovary rather than under it). The flowers have a slight scent and are pollinated primarily by bees and bumblebees. The fruits are three-sided capsules containing a number of yellowish-brown seeds that are 1/16 to 1/8 inch long and have a projection called an aril.

The lance-shaped leaves are two-ranked as in other irises and are up to eight inches long. There is no stem above ground below the leaves. The one- to three-inch tall flowering stem is terete or round. The underground storage structure is a slender, branched rhizome with fibrous roots.

The rhizomes of all irises are poisonous with the presence of the compound irisin. The rhizome and all flower parts may cause dermatitis or skin irritation in some persons. The rhizomes cause diarrhea and vomiting when ingested in too high a concentration. Like many "poisons", extracts or other preparations of the rhizomes have been used to treat various ailments such as liver problems, ulcers, earache, toothache, colds, cholera, and as a laxative. American Indians used iris rhizomes in many of the ways just mentioned as well as pulverized to make a poultice to treat burns, wounds, and rheumatic joints.

Five other species of iris are found in our area including four native species and one introduced species. The natives are *I. virginica* (Virginia blue flag), *I. versicolor* (larger blue flag), *I. prismatica* (narrow blue flag), and *I. verna* (spring iris). All the native species are blue to lavender while the introduced species, *I. pseudacorus* (yellow iris) is yellow in color. All of these species, except the spring iris which blooms in very early spring, bloom from late April into May. This spring look for these attractive irises that rival the beauty of cultivated species.

FROM THE PRESIDENT, continued

We spent a busy weekend planting, cutting grass, and planning for the future. A good thing that Jenifer plans several rock gardens. For every spade of earth we had to remove a handful of stones of differing sizes. Very different to our own Prince William heavier, but virtually rockless, clay soil.

However, although we returned with tired, aching muscles we also returned invigorated from a heavy quota of fresh air and sun and from gazing at the vistas of the surrounding mountains. Virginia is truly a beautiful state.

Another successful plant sale is now behind us. Thanks to all who helped in many ways and especially to plant sale chairman, Nancy Vehrs, who, in addition to potting several hundred plants, did the publicity (including a notice in *The Washington Post*), scheduled the sale day helpers, introduced a better financial record keeping system, and revised the cultivation information handout. Thanks, Nancy, for a super job! Our next regular meeting is May 21. See you there!

NATIVES FOR THE GARDEN

NANCY ARRINGTON
Propagation Chairman



Dwarf Crested Iris

Iris cristata

Dwarf crested iris is a delightful plant for the partially shaded garden. After the beautiful miniature flowers have disappeared the foliage stays attractive until frost. It is native to Prince William County and most of Virginia's mountain and piedmont counties.

Typical sword shaped foliage begins growing in early spring and reaches 4-8". Flowering stems are around 2" and the 2-3" lavender blue flowers with a white or yellow crest on the sepals are nestled among the leaves. Darker blue and purple flowered forms are available from specialty nurseries and a lovely white flowered form is fairly common. They bloom in our area is late April into May.

Dwarf crested iris grows naturally on rich wooded slopes and prefers good drainage in the garden. In *Growing and Propagating Wild Flowers*, Harry Phillips says plants growing in rich, moist woodland soil are likely to make excessive foliage growth at the

expense of flower production. He recommends adding sand or composted leaves to the planting site and says that a very dryish, ordinary soil where water drains away rapidly will maintain the plants' naturally compact habit. It prefers a neutral or slightly acid soil.

Like many woodland plants crested iris prefers some shade but blooms better with some direct sun. Plants in my garden that received several hours of sun bloomed profusely, but by mid-summer the foliage had turned yellow. Plants that received just a little direct sun or were in high shade bloomed sparsely but the foliage stayed attractive. A location with a few hours of morning sun is probably ideal.

Dwarf crested iris is a wonderful edging or ground cover plant. Put it beside a path or at the front of a bed so it can be appreciated up close. It's a good filler or weaver among taller natives such as clumping ferns, Solomon's-seal, and bleeding heart. In *Pioneering With Wildflowers* George D. Aiken recommends it for the partially shaded rock garden and says "... this little chap struts along the rocks as gaily as if he were the biggest of his family".

Plants are easily increased by division at most any time. Seed which is set sparsely can be collected in early summer as the capsules start to dry out. It will germinate better if sown immediately while the aril is still attached. Dried seed can be stored in the refrigerator for later sowing but germination will be slow and sparse.

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DWARF CRESTED IRIS

Iris cristata

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