

WILD NEWS

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

MARCH MEETING

Wetland Plants & The Chesapeake Bay

Monday, March 16, 1992, 7:30 p.m.

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

Our March speaker is Jean Watts, a wetland ecologist with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Wetlands are receiving a lot of attention these days and we're fortunate to have a speaker who'll give us a first-hand report on the Chesapeake Bay and its plants. We'll learn about the plants that grow in the Bay's wetlands and how they contribute to its health. This promises to be a very informative program – come and bring a friend. Plans for our many spring events will be discussed and our 10th anniversary will be observed (see article on this page).

PWWS Wildflower Walks

Marion Lobstein, PWWS botany chair, will lead two walks for chapter members:

Sunday, April 12, 2-4 p.m., at Balls Bluff in Loudoun County.

Sunday, April 19, 2-3:30 p.m., at Riverbend Park. Potowmack and Piedmont Chapter members are also invited to attend both walks. For reservations for the free walks or for directions, call Marion, 536-7150.



10th Anniversary Celebration

Although our chapter was not officially chartered until January 10, 1983, our first meeting was held on Saturday, March 20, 1982. At the suggestion of Jennifer Bradford, we'll observe this special occasion at our March 16 meeting. Some "old timers" will speak briefly about our early days. Newsletters, scrapbooks and other mementos of our first 10 years will be on display. Nancy Vehrs who furnishes homemade goodies for all our meetings has promised to make a birthday cake. Come and be part of our celebration!

Our Virginia Wildflower Celebration runs through the months of April and May. Events sponsored by all chapters will be featured in the *Spring Bulletin*. Our own chapter activities are detailed inside this newsletter. Plan to get out and celebrate wildflowers and spring during the next several weeks.

Virginia Wildflower of the Year

Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) is our VNPS 1992 Wildflower of the Year. The bright orange flowers of this perennial milkweed light up roadsides, meadows and gardens in June and July. Members will receive a descriptive brochure with their summer *Bulletin*. Propagated plants will be available at our May 9 plant sale, and seed from Nicky Staunton's garden is available. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Butterfly Weed Seed, P.O. Box 83, Manassas, VA 22110 and we'll send you a free packet of seed.

NEXT MEETING

The May membership meeting will be on the third Monday, May 18th, 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church. Our program will be on champion trees – details in next newsletter.

Wildflower Program at Blandy

A classroom session and field trip on Saturday, May 2, 10:30 a.m.-noon at Blandy will focus on the techniques of wildflower identification. Bring a copy of *Newcombe's Wildflower Guide* (available in the arboretum shop). Fee is \$8 for non-members and \$5 for members; call 703-837-1758 for information or reservations. Rain date is Sunday, May 3, 2-3:30 p.m.

Corporate Sponsor

Ed Milhous, owner of White Oak Pest Management and a PWWS charter member, has upgraded his membership this year to Corporate Sponsor. Thanks, Ed!

Virginia Urban Forest Council

The Virginia Department of Forestry announces the formation of a new non-profit organization called the Virginia Urban Forest Council devoted to the awareness of tree values and to improving the forests in and around our communities. VUFC will provide a forum for sharing technical information, developing new programs, and generating funds for Virginia's urban forests. To request a brochure, call Keith Hawkins, Virginia Department of Forestry, 368-3741.

N.C. Wildflower of the Year

The North Carolina Botanical Garden's Wildflower for 1992 is blue wild indigo, *Baptisia australis*. This easy-care native perennial has attractive blue-green clover-like foliage and violet blue flowers. For a copy of NCBG's descriptive brochure and a packet of seed, send a business-size, stamped, self-addressed envelope to 1992 N.C. Wildflower of the Year, NCBG, UNC-Chapel Hill, Box 3375, Totten Center, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3375.

April Board Meeting

The April board meeting, open to all members, will be held on the usual third Monday, the 20th, 7:30 pm at Bethel Lutheran Church.

WILD NEWS

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President, Claudia Thompson-Deahl, 754-9235

Editor, Nancy Arrington, 368-8431

Artist, Nicky Staunton, 368-9803

Deadline for the May-June issue is May 1, 1992.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

CLAUDIA THOMPSON-DEAHL

Happy Spring! It's the time of year to get out and start looking for the spring ephemerals and enjoy the beauty of our early wildflowers. With our warm February it looks like spring is going to be coming early this year.

Our usual spring programs are all shaping up, so mark your calendar now for identification hikes, the garden tour, plant sale, and the photography winter workshop. You will be able to sign up to help out with the garden tour and plant sale at our March 16 meeting. As you walk around your flower beds, think about the plants you can divide for our annual plant sale. We have been busy with judging the botany category of the regional science fair, walking wetlands and the trails at Conway Robinson Memorial Forest.

If you are planning to put in new gardens this spring, remember now is the time to send in your soil sample. The soil is the foundation of all gardens and your projects should begin with this test. Also, when purchasing natives for the garden, remember to check with the nurseries to see if their plants have been propagated.

I am looking forward to seeing you at our March 16 meeting with Jean Watts giving our program on Wetland Plants. Wetlands are so important to our ecosystems that I'm sure this will be an interesting program. Bring a friend and I'll see you there.

Walks & Events at P.W. Forest Park

The Friends of Prince William Forest Park will meet at the visitors center at 9 a.m. on Saturday March 14. After the membership meeting, at 11 a.m., Elaine Haug, our chapter representative on the VNPS Registry Committee, will lead a walk to look for early spring wildflowers.

On Sunday, March 15, 1-2:30 p.m., an open forum will be held to discuss any matters that concern the park. The meeting is open to the public - bring a picnic lunch and meet at the visitors center.

A spring wildflower walk is scheduled for Saturday, March 21, 1-2 p.m.; meet at Turkey Ridge. Call the park, 221-7181, for information about any of these events and for walks scheduled for April.



Golden Ragwort

Senecio aureus

MARION BLOIS LOBSTEIN
Associate Professor, Biology, NVCC

Senecio aureus, commonly called golden ragwort, is a perennial member of the Asteraceae or aster family. The deep purple buds on this plant appear as early as late February or early March and open in late April to reveal the deep golden color of the ray and disk flowers. The basal leaves, heart-shaped at the base and rounded at the apex, with a toothed margin, are maroon on the under surface and persist throughout the winter adding color to a winter walk.

This species of the composite family is found in in virtually every county of Virginia in moist to swampy woods. Its range is from Florida and Texas north to Maryland and Kentucky and west to Minnesota. The genus name of *Senecio* is from the latin term "senex" meaning an old man, referring to the white hair-like pappus of the fruit of this genus and *aureus* refers to the golden flowers. Other common names are liferoot, female regulator, squawweed, coughweed, butterweed, and golden groundsel. These names refer to the appearance of the flowers or to medicinal uses of the plant.

Golden ragwort's purplish buds open to reveal the bright golden yellow of the handsome flowers made up of eight to 12 ray flowers (like the "petals" of a daisy) that are one-quarter to one-half inch long, and of disk flowers (like the "center" of a daisy) that form a center one-quarter to one-half inch wide. The fruit that forms after plants finish blooming around mid-May is similar to that of the dandelion but is more delicate with fine white hairs of the modified sepals each of which is called a pappus. These fruits are dispersed by wind like those of a dandelion.

The stems of golden ragwort are three to four feet tall with stem leaves of two types, both quite different from the basal leaves. The lower stem leaves are lyre-shaped and are deeply toothed or incised; upper ones are lance-shaped and are also deeply incised.

Rhizomes with shallow root systems allow the plant to spread asexually.

American Indians and herbalists had numerous medicinal uses of this species. As late as the early 1950's it was listed as a medicinal plant in pharmacognosy (pharmaceutical botany) texts. Many of its uses were for female problems ranging from menstrual cramps and irregularity to curing excessive vaginal discharge to inducing labor to dealing with difficulties of menopause. In men it was used to treat prostrate problems. Other common uses included treating urinary tract problems such as kidney problems and kidney stones, and respiratory system problems such as lung ailments, coughs, even tuberculosis. It was also used to treat poor circulation and high blood pressure, prolonged fever, nervous disorders, liver problems and diarrhea. It has purported stimulant, diuretic, relaxant, astringent, emenagogue (regulating menstruation), and tonic properties. In reality, extracts or teas made from this plant contain powerful alkaloids such as aureine and others that can be quite toxic and that may cause liver damage.

With its handsome basal leaves, golden ragwort adds color to many local woods all year long. In early spring when you are enjoying walks in the woods, look for the deep maroon buds that belie the bright golden flowers that will later unfurl. When you see these cheerful signs of the renewal of life in early spring you will know that other spring wildflowers will soon follow.

Wintergreen Symposium

Wintergreen's ninth annual Wildflower Symposium will be held May 15-17. The weekend consists of some 70 events including walks to see wildflowers, ferns, birds and mushrooms. Indoor programs cover many related topics. PWS member Marion Lobstein will give a program and lead a walk. For information and a brochure, call 804-325-2200, Ext. 391, or write to Wintergreen, P.O. Box 706, Wintergreen, VA 22958.

Wildflowers at National Arboretum

On Sunday, April 5 at 1:30 p.m., Peter Mazzeo, botanist at the arboretum, will present a slide lecture featuring Eastern U.S. wildflowers through the seasons. Fee for the program, held in the arboretum auditorium, is \$5; call 202-475-4857 to register.

Joan Feely, curator of native plants, will lead a walk through Fern Valley at 1:00 p.m., Saturday, April 11. Meet at the entrance to Fern Valley for this free program.

Bluebell Walk at Bull Run

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority's annual Bluebell Walk will be held Sunday, April 12 at 2 p.m. at Bull Run Regional Park. Self-guiding pamphlets are available at the park. Week-day group tours can be scheduled during Bluebell Week, April 12-17, by calling 631-0550 two weeks in advance. To reach the park take Rt. 66 to the Centreville exit and follow signs to the entrance.

Wildflower Walks at Great Falls

Marion Lobstein will continue to lead wildflower walks the third Sunday of each month, 10 a.m.-noon, at Great Falls Park, VA. These will be March 15, April 19, and May 10 (second Sunday). Participants should meet at the visitors center at the park. The walks are free but there is a \$3 fee to get into the park unless you have purchased a park service pass.

Programs for 1992

Our president, Claudia Deahl who also serves as program chair, has planned the following programs for this year:

- Monday, May 18, Champion Trees by Dick Hoff
- Monday, July 20, Native Plants for Rock Gardens by Karen Rexrode
- Sept. or Oct. - Annual Meeting on Saturday
- Monday, November 16, Invasive Exotics by Ted Scott.

Except for the annual meeting which is held outdoors at a member's home or at a local park, all membership meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church, Plantation Ln. & Sudley Rd., Manassas. For information about programs or to suggest one for next year, call Claudia, 754-9235.

Field Botany at Blandly

Field Botany, a 3-credit course, will be taught by Marion Lobstein at Blandly, June 15-July 2. The emphasis in this course will be on field work to reinforce lecture and lab work. Trips will include the Blandly property and nearby sites, the G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area, Skyline Drive, Great Meadow, the Fort Valley area, and Huntley Meadows. For additional information, call Blandly at 703-837-1758 or Marion Lobstein, 703-257-6643.

7th Annual Garden Tour

This year's tour will be held (rain or shine!) Saturday, April 25, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and Sunday April 26, 1-5 p.m. This year tour will have a definite "environmentally conscious" theme since all three gardens are owned or tended by gardeners with a concern for the environment.

Ed and Roberta Milhous's large garden in Haymarket includes a front wildflower meadow garden and a back garden with a pool and emphasis on habitats for birds and other wildlife. Ed is a former county extension agent, and practices organic gardening and pest management at home and through his business, White Oak Pest Management.

Phyllis and Billy Teels garden on five acres off Morningside Drive south of Manassas. The garden consists of naturalistic woodland areas, perennial beds, and a beautifully planted swale that's kept constantly moist by an underground spring. Phyllis is president of Countryside Garden Club and Billy is a biologist with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service.

Our third garden, located off Sudley Manor Drive, is owned by Roberta Whitmore and is maintained by PWWS member, garden designer and organic gardener Marie Davis. Marie says the back yard was literally covered with honeysuckle which she cleared, then cut paths and planted a large woodland garden.

Helen Walter, garden tour chair, needs help from members to get the gardens ready, and to serve as hosts during the tour. Call her, 754-8806, and offer your help. The tour is free since it serves as an educational project for our chapter and gives visitors a preview of plants that will be available at our May 9 sale. A folder with a map showing garden locations will be sent to members, area garden clubs and visitors at past tours.

Area Plant Sales

Horticultural Fair & Plant Sale at Blandly, Saturday May 9, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m., and Sunday, May 10, noon-4:30 p.m. Info: 703-837-1758.

Countryside Garden Club, Saturday, April 25, 9 a.m.-noon at the home of Kathy Madsen, 8323 Morningside Dr., info: 703-791-4359.

Potowmack Chapter, VNPS, Green Spring Gardens Park, Annandale, Saturday, May 16, 11 a.m. Info: Tiana Camfiord 703-830-3783.

Landon School, Bethesda, MD, May 1-3, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., info: 301-320-3200.

10th Annual Plant Sale

The tenth annual plant sale will be Saturday, May 9, 9 a.m. till noon in Bethel Lutheran Church's parking lot, Plantation Ln. and Sudley Road, Manassas. Nancy Vehrs, 368-2898, will chair the sale again this year.

We need help from all our members to make this sale as successful as the past nine have been. Large and small ways of helping include:

- Potting plants from your own garden
- Potting plants donated by other members
- Setting up tables and arranging plants the morning of the sale
- Assisting customers, serving as cashiers, helping with clean-up during the sale
- Buying plants and encouraging your friends to come and buy

Please keep these guidelines in mind:

Pot up plants by April 18 so they won't wilt on sale day. Call Nancy Vehrs, 368-2898, or Nancy Arrington, 368-8431, or Marie Davis, 361-1626, if you need pots.

- Let Nancy Vehrs know as soon as possible what plants you'll be bringing so our cultivation sheets will be complete. We don't sell wild-collected plants, difficult species such as lady's-slippers, or invasive species such as thistles.

- Please label your plants before sale day (call Nancy for labels) with common and botanical names. If you need help with labeling, call Nancy so her committee can get the plants labeled.

- Use a good loose potting soil that drains well. Add plenty of organic matter to purchased top soil or your own garden soil. We have a good supply of excellent potting soil that Gil Meadows Nursery sells to us at cost.

- Make arrangements with Nancy to drop off your plants at her house or to take them to a central location or to have them picked up before sale day. If plants are delivered to the church the day of the sale, please get them there by 7:30 a.m.

- Remember that members get a 10% discount on plants purchased.

If you'd like a complimentary copy of our newsletter and a membership brochure sent to a prospective member please let us know: PWWS, P.O. Box 83, Manassas, VA 22110, or call Nancy Arrington, 368-8431. DUES WILL INCREASE JUNE 1.

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Membership Application

NEW RENEWAL

Name(s) _____ Date _____

Address _____

Phone(s): Home () _____ Work () _____

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior (60 or over) \$5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Family \$10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Associate (groups) \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Sponsor \$125 | |

Make check payable to VNPS and mail to:

Membership Chair
P.O. Box 83
Manassas, VA 22110

I wish to participate in the following:

- Promotion of legislation aimed at plant protection
- Development of programs, displays, literature
- Producing member publications Photography
- Stewardship of wildflower plantings/preserves
- Native plant landscaping Botanical surveys
- Public speaking Youth programs Art
- Plant rescue Typing Telephoning
- Other _____

I give I do not give permission for my (our name(s), address and telephone number to be published in a chapter directory or exchanged with other related organizations.

NATIVES FOR THE GARDEN

NANCY ARRINGTON
Propagation Chairman



Golden Ragwort

Senecio aureus

In my garden the bright green foliage of golden ragwort (*Senecio aureus*) has been attractive all winter, and now fat buds that match the purplish color of the undersides of the leaves promise bright yellow flowers in a few more weeks. This easy-care perennial is a wonderful plant for a naturalistic garden or a cultivated bed or border.

The genus name comes from the Latin *senex*, an old man, and alludes to the white fluffy seed heads of the senecios; *aureus* refers to the golden flowers. Also called golden groundsel, this species grows naturally in moist woods and meadows, along streams, and in swampy areas from Ontario, Quebec and Newfoundland south to Georgia and west to Minnesota and Arkansas. It's found throughout Virginia.

It's unusual to see a composite blooming in the garden in early April and golden ragwort's 4" clusters of small daisy-like flowers bring an almost summer-like warmth to the spring garden. The flowers which rise 2-3' above the foliage are especially nice with low growing natives such as wild blue phlox (*P. divaricata*) and wild geranium (*G. maculatum*). One of the prettiest combinations in my garden happened accidentally last spring when a golden ragwort snuggled up to a slender deutzia. The delicate white and yellow mingle of blossoms was beautiful for two or three weeks. Clumps of glossy foliage make attractive year-round ground cover and are nice interspersed with ferns

After it's established in the garden golden ragwort adapts to fairly dry soil and will bloom in full sun to half shade. It is a strong grower and should not be planted in a rich moist soil where it might overrun smaller, slow-growing plants.

Plants can be propagated by division most anytime. Seed sown in an outdoor bed in early summer will germinate the following spring. This provides the moist cold stratification that improves seed germination of composites. Propagated plants will be available at our May 9 plant sale.

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY
A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society
P.O. BOX 83, MANASSAS, VA 22110



Golden Ragwort

Senecio aureus

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