



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

NOVEMBER MEETING

Invasive Exotics

Monday, November 16, 1992, 7:30 p.m.
Bethel Lutheran Church, Plantation Ln. & Sudley Rd.

If you've ever tried to keep honeysuckle out of your woods, dandelions out of your lawn, and knotweed out of your vegetable or flower beds, you'll appreciate our November program on invasive exotic plants. Ted Scott, Conservation Chair of the VNPS, has been compiling a list of non-native species that, because of their invasive nature, are taking over natural areas and threatening to choke out native species. Many, such as Japanese honeysuckle and multiflora rose, are familiar in waste places, along highways and in our parks. Others, such as the mile-a-minute vine, are just showing up in our area. In his slide program, Ted will show us which plants are considered invasive and will give us some tips for controlling them in our gardens, parks and other public places.

Help Wanted

Our chapter is hosting the Virginia Native Plant Society annual meeting, September 17-19, 1993. This event requires much planning and preparation and extensive member participation is vital for its success. This is a fun and educational weekend with speakers, field trips, childrens' program, short business meeting, silent auction, and banquet dinner and speaker. Please plan to attend an organizational meeting of the Annual Meeting Committee at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 9, at Bethel Lutheran Church. Please contact committee co-chairs, Nancy Herwig, 754-2328, or Martha Slover, 818-9517, to volunteer your much-needed services

No December Board Meeting

Next Board meeting will be February 15. Details in the January newsletter.

Craft Sale at Nov. Meeting

In addition to the regular program, the November membership meeting is designated as the annual "Craft Sale". Members are welcome to sell their wildflower and nature related wares at this meeting. Please set up items for sale by 7 p.m.; sales will take place at the meeting intermission. For more information, call Nancy Vehrs, 368-2898.

NEXT MEETING

Our January meeting will be Monday, January 18, 1993, at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church. This is our member participation slide program and everyone is invited to participate. Call Nancy Vehrs, 368-2898, for information or to arrange your spot on the program.

Wildlife Art Show

The 18th Annual Wildlife Art & Photography Show will be held Saturday and Sunday, March 13 and 14, 1993, from 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Wakefield Park, Annandale. Wildlife artists, photographers, carvers, and other artisans are invited to apply to exhibit and sell their original wildlife-theme art work. Registration deadline is December 15; call Hidden Oaks Nature Center, 941-1065, for forms and additional information.

New PWWS Officers

PWWS officers for the next two years elected at our annual meeting are:

President – Nancy Vehrs
Vice president – Claudia Thompson-Deahl
Secretary – Jeanne Endrikat
Treasurer – Marie Davis

Hospitality Chair Needed

Since our former hospitality chair, Nancy Vehrs, is now president, we need someone to take over that job. Other members are willing to provide refreshments so the job involves coordination and arriving a bit early at membership meetings to set up the coffee pot, etc. If you can serve as chair or if you're willing to help with refreshments, call Nancy Vehrs, 368-2898. And THANKS to Nancy for a great job!

Gardens Wanted

The PWWS Board is seeking recommendations of local wildflower gardens for the annual garden tour. To suggest a garden for next year (or for the future) or to receive advice about how to get a garden ready for the tour, call Marie Davis, 361-1626, or Nancy Arrington, 368-8431.

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Deadline for the Jan.-Feb. issue is Jan. 4, 1993



FROM THE PRESIDENT

NANCY VEHR'S

What a challenging year we have ahead of us! Our chapter will host the annual meeting of the entire Virginia Native Plant Society next year. Please mark your calendar for September 17-19, 1993. As noted elsewhere in this newsletter, we need many volunteers to ensure a successful event and planning cannot begin too soon. Many thanks to Nancy Herwig and Martha Slover who volunteered to co-chair the Annual Meeting Committee.

I have spoken to Helen Walter who is on the mend. She welcomes telephone calls, 754-8806, but she does retire early in the evening. Helen has agreed to continue as our chapter historian, but that requires the cooperation of our members. Please send newspaper clippings, photographs, and other chapter-related memorabilia to her at 2539 Youngs Dr., Haymarket, VA 22069.

As we rake all those glorious leaves and put our gardens to be for the winter, please consider collecting the seed from your wildflowers for propagation for the annual plant sale in May. Please call Nancy Arrington at 368-8431 if you need propagation advice.

I hope that many of you will be able to attend the November meeting. Ted Scott, Conservation Chair of the state Society, will present an informative program on "Invasive Exotics" and the Chapter will have its annual "Craft Sale."

BayScapes

Even though our area doesn't border the Chesapeake Bay, we are adding to its pollution with excessive fertilizers and pesticides. BayScapes encourages environmentally sensitive landscaping practices including an emphasis on the use of native plants. The program is being developed by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Chesapeake Bay Estuary Program. Free BayScaping information is available from the Alliance by writing to them at P.O. Box 1981, Richmond, VA 23216, or call 1-800-662-CRIS.

Medicinal Plants and The 1492 Discovery Of the New World

MARION BLOIS LOBSTEIN
Associate Professor, Biology, NVCC

This October was the five hundredth anniversary of the 1492 "discovery" of the New World by Columbus. This "discovery" has been described by many as "the collision of two old worlds." The exchange of knowledge of medicinal plants was an important result of the meeting of these two worlds.

Native American tribes north of Mexico at the time of Columbus's discovery had, according to many estimates, 750 or more species of medicinal plants in use to treat routine problems of the urinary tract, gastrointestinal tract (including intestinal parasites and hemorrhoids), rheumatic conditions, and eye irritation (from smoky living conditions). Plants were also used for healing wounds, fractures, rashes, etc. Many of their techniques, especially those dealing with wounds and with childbirth (including advanced methods of delivering the placenta), used near aseptic measures and included the use of medicinal plants now known to have antiseptic properties such as extracts of wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) rhizome.

Dealing with "female problems" at all levels from easing menstruation and birthing pain, inducing abortions, to practicing birth control with medicinal plants put many Native American practices on a more humane basis than those used in Europe. Native Americans made many advances in easing childbirth and in making it safer by using plants such as blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*), golden ragwort (*Senecio aureus*), wild ginger (*A. canadense*), and trilliums (*Trillium* spp.) that increased uterine contractions.

Early English and French explorers, fur traders, and colonists were more willing than Spanish explorers to exchange information about medicinal plants with Native Americans. Cartier, the French explorer of the 1530's, was losing most of his crew to the ravages of scurvy when he found Native Americans using the vitamin C rich bark of conifers such as hemlock and spruce to prevent the disease.

Following contact with both white men and their diseases, American Natives at first eagerly adopted (and later probably desperately tried to use to fight the new diseases introduced from the Old World)

the new European medicinal plants to deal with the deadly new diseases brought in by Europeans. Some of the Old World plants, now considered lawn or roadside weeds, that quickly naturalized and were adopted by East Coast Native Americans included coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*) for coughs, common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) as a laxative and to purify blood, flannel mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) for kidney problems and to ease pain, burdock (*Actinum minus*) to treat venereal disease and to cleanse the blood, English plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) as a diuretic and as an astringent, catnip (*Nepeta cataria*) to treat female problems and intestinal worms, garlic mustard (*Alliaria officinalis*) for a diuretic and antiseptic, ground-ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) for colds and measles, and common chickweed (*Stellaria media*) for worms and for poultices.

The exchange of New World plants with the Old World began early with quinine to fight malaria, evening primrose (*Oenothera biennis*) to treat asthma and whooping cough, sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) and lobelia species (*Lobelia cardinalis*, *L. inflata*, *L. siphilitica*) to treat syphilis, amaranth (*Amaranthus* spp.) to treat venereal diseases and smallpox, dogbane (*Apocynum* spp.) species to treat worms and syphilis, even poison ivy (*Rhus radicans*) as a diuretic and laxative! Tobacco (*Nicotiana* spp.) was first introduced to Europe as much for its medicinal properties as for the pleasure of smoking. American Natives primarily smoked tobacco along with other plants for ceremonial purposes as well as to dress wounds and as a sedative, anti-spasmodic, insecticide, and vermifuge (to treat intestinal worms). Culpeper in his European herbal of the mid-1600's lists many species introduced from the New World into the Old.

The above lists of medicinal plant species exchanged between Old and the New Worlds is just a sampling of the many species that played a role in this important aspect of these two cultures coming in contact. The next time you pull up a dandelion from your lawn, give your cat a catnip treat, or avoid contact with poison ivy, remember the role these and many other plants we take for granted once played in history.

Coming Programs

Suggestions for 1992-93 program topics include Wildflowers for Roadsides, Ferns and Fern Allies, Wild Edibles and Medicinal Plants, and Native Plants for Birds. If you have other ideas for speakers, please let Nancy Herwig know, 754-2328.

Winterberry Holly

Ilex verticillata

Beautiful bright red berries make winterberry holly one of the most cheerful plants you can add to your garden for winter interest. Its native habitat is wet areas from Nova Scotia to Minnesota and south to Florida, Mississippi and Arkansas, including almost all Virginia counties.

This deciduous holly grows 6-10' tall and tends to sucker, forming large multi-stemmed clumps. But it can be pruned at the base leaving several stems to develop giving a neater looking, better fruiting shrub. The inch wide leaves are 2-4' long and lack the leatherness of those of evergreen hollies.

Winterberry loses its leaves with the first hard frost, revealing fine twiggy branches studded with ¼" red berries that remain attractive until January unless they're eaten by birds. Cut branches make wonderful holiday decorations. In the garden, winterberry will be most effective against a background of evergreens, especially one of American holly (*I. opaca*). A weathered gray fence or suitably colored house wall are also good backgrounds.

Although it will grow in standing water in the wild, winterberry easily adapts to ordinary garden conditions. Give it a humus rich, slightly acid soil in full sun or part shade. As with all newly planted trees and shrubs, water well for the first year until established and mulch to keep the soil constantly moist. Fertilize with an organic fertilizer such as cottonseed meal in late winter or early spring.

Hollies are dioecious, meaning separate male and female plants. Flowers of male plants produce pollen and flowers of female plants, when pollinated, produce berries. You don't need a male plant of the same species for pollination, just one that blooms at the same time which in our area is the American holly (late spring and early summer). Propagate winterberry holly by cuttings taken in June and July or by seed which needs stratification and may take years to germinate.

Deciduous hollies are becoming popular with landscapers and nurserymen and many cultivars and hybrids are available. 'Winter Red' and 'Christmas Cheer' are *I. verticillata* selections, and 'Sparkleberry' and 'Harvest Red' are hybrids of *I. verticillata* and the Japanese species, *I. serrata*.

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Flannel Mullein

Verbascum thapsus

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