

WILD NEWS

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

JULY MEETING

Bog & Wetland Plants

Monday, July 19, 1993, 7:30 p.m.

Bethel Lutheran Church, Plantation Lane & Sudley Road, Manassas, Va.

Our July program on plants for bogs and other wet areas in the garden will be presented by John Hummer, VNPS member from Arlington, Va. John will talk about sundews and other carnivorous plants, orchids native to wet areas, and additional interesting and unusual plants. He will bring some of the plants that he propagates in his backyard nursery to illustrate his talk.

At the business meeting following the program, we will have reports on our state and chapter annual meetings, fair display and other projects. Don't miss this exciting program — John is a very knowledgeable speaker.

VNPS Annual Meeting

Our plans to host the VNPS annual meeting Sept. 17-19 are progressing nicely. On Friday evening, Marion Lobstein will present a slide program at the Manassas Campus of Northern Virginia Community College. A reception with refreshments will follow and guests will be able to tour the campus wildflower garden. On Saturday, field trips, garden tours and special programs for children are scheduled. Saturday evening events include the annual meeting, live auction and banquet with an interesting and entertaining speaker. Please plan to attend as many events as you can — let's have good participation among our own members!

Auction Items Needed

Please contribute items for the auction that will be held during the annual meeting. Our chapter is trying something new this year — an auctioneer to auction off the items. This means we need good quality wildflower and nature-related items that will bring a good price. Ideas include artwork, photography, craft items, plants and gardening tools and books. If you can help by contributing articles or asking local businesses for items, please call Nancy Herwig at 703-754-2328.

Hospitality Chair Wanted

The Society is looking for someone to serve as Hospitality Chair. The primary duty is to ensure the provision of refreshments at the regular membership meetings. Expenses are reimbursable. To learn more about the position or to volunteer, please contact Nancy Vehrs at 703-368-2898.

August Board Meeting

The August PWWS Board of Directors meeting will be Monday, Aug. 30, 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church. The meeting was changed from our usual third Monday to accommodate vacation schedules.

Next Meeting

Mark your calendar for our CHAPTER annual meeting and potluck picnic, Sunday, Oct. 3 at James Long Park near Haymarket, Va. Details will be sent to members in early September.

Wetland Plants Course to be Offered

Marion Lobstein will be offering a two-credit course, BIO 295-73M entitled "Special Topics in Wetland Plants" at the NVCC-Manassas Campus in the Fall Semester 1993. This course will concentrate on the identification and ecology of wetland plants. Emphasis will be on identification of plant species and their ecological relationships in the field.

Lectures will be held on the Manassas Campus from 4:30 to 6:15 p.m. on four Wednesdays from Oct. 13 through Nov. 3. Two field trips to local marshes such as those at Mason Neck, Huntley Meadow, Dyke Marsh, and Roosevelt Island will be on Saturdays Oct. 16 and 30 from 9 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. There will also be a weekend field trip on Saturday, Nov. 6 and Sunday, Nov. 7 to Chincoteague, Va. to explore the marshes on Assateague Island. Students must provide their own transportation and pay for lodging for this trip.

For additional information, please call Marion Lobstein at 703-323-3000 ext. 6643 at the Manassas Campus or at home at 703-536-7150.

Fall Arts & Crafts Shows

FORT BELVOIR: Aug. 24 is the deadline for entries in the Oct. 23 Fort Belvoir Outdoor Recreation Wildlife Arts & Craft Show. Categories include original artwork (prints, drawings, paintings) and crafts (wood, metal, clay, glass, leather, needlepoint) depicting wildlife. For information and an entry form, please call Diane Blankenship at 703-805-2964 or 703-805-2538.

CRYSTAL CITY: An arts and crafts show will be held at the Crystal City Hyatt Regency, Sunday, Nov. 21, in connection with the National Interpreters' Workshop for rangers, naturalists, educators, museum and park administrators. Deadline for entries is Aug. 2. For information and an entry form, write to: Tom Mullin, Hidden Oaks Nature Center, 4020 Hummer Rd., Annandale, VA 22003, or call 703-941-1065.

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Deadline for the Sept.-Oct. issue is Sept. 1, 1993.



From the President NANCY VEHRs

Summer's heat and humidity have arrived. After a wonderfully wet spring, the summer forecast is much drier. In the edible garden, I enjoyed a good strawberry and black raspberry harvest earlier this year; I had more than enough to bake pies and make cheesecake and ice cream toppings. The cucumbers, beans and tomatoes are looking good now, although they require watering.

In the wildflower garden, my phlox, butterfly weed, and monarda look great. Butterflies are visiting my purple coneflower. I'm also pleased with the quick recovery of my Joe Pye Weed which I cut back in June after it had attained a height of over 5 feet! I've added several different varieties of asters this year and last, so my garden color should continue well into the fall. Alas, my beds are small and I have too much grass on my lot, but I never take the big step to put more of it into garden cultivation. Maybe next year.

Plans for the state annual meeting, Sept. 17-19, are well underway. Look for your registration form with further details to arrive with your *Bulletin* next month. We're planning to showcase the beauty of Prince William County for our friends from across the state. Events include a banquet dinner and compelling speaker, many field trips, garden tours and children's activities.

Once the state meeting is behind us, we will have our chapter annual meeting at James Long Park in Haymarket, Va. on Sunday, Oct. 3. Our meeting will be informal and include a potluck picnic. I hope many of you will be able to attend.

Everyone should be enjoying the vacation season now. Next month I'll be venturing off to Alaska for two weeks. I'll visit Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and Kenai Fjords National Park south of Anchorage as well as Denali National Park, home of Mt. McKinley, aka Denali, during a 10-day tent and cabin safari. It promises to be a most exciting journey.

See you at the meeting on July 19.

Native Ferns for the Garden

Join botanist Peter Mazzeo for a walk through the U.S. National Arboretum's Fern Valley, 1 p.m., Thursday, July 22. Meet at the entrance to Fern Valley.

Sundews

MARION LOBSTEIN

Associate Professor, Biology, NVCC

In bogs, fens and other wetlands up and down the East Coast of North America, you see some of the strangest plants, the sundews (*Drosera* spp.). Known as insectivorous plants, they have several-inch wide basal rosettes of leaves that are modified to entrap and digest insects. During the summer months they produce delicate coiled spikes of white to pink to lavender flowers. The habitats of various species of sundew vary from bogs which have an acid pH to fens which may be alkaline. The range of many of the four species found in Virginia (*D. intermedia*, *D. rotundifolia*, *D. capillaris*, and *D. brevifolia*) and a fifth found in Suitland Bog in Maryland (*D. filiformis*) is widespread along the East Coast and in some cases throughout the Northern Hemisphere. The genus name of *Drosera* is derived from a Greek term "droseros" meaning dewy, referring to the fluid drops resembling dew that are produced on the leaf glands.

The half-inch wide flowers of the sundews of our general area are all similar in size and structure but may vary in color from white to pink to lavender. The up to 8-9" tall flowering stem will bear a number of flowers in a one-sided raceme that coils during early development of the flower buds. Each flower has five green sepals, five colored petals, five stamens, and a superior ovary with three to five styles and stigmas. The flowers are insect pollinated or may self-pollinate in some species if cross pollination does not occur during a given time period. The fruit that develops is a capsule with numerous small black seeds. Seed dispersal is mechanical when the capsule opens at maturity.

The 2-3" wide basal rosette of modified leaves is

the part of the plant that attracts our attention most of the year. The leaf pad shapes vary from oval to spatulate to linear depending on the species. The modified pads will have numerous red glandular projections (trichomes or plant hairs) each of which secrete a drop of a glistening, clear, sticky fluid. These drops resemble dew and reflect sunlight, thus giving this plant its common name. These drops attract and trap mosquitoes, damselflies, gnats and other small insects that fly by. Once the insect stops to investigate these inviting drops, it becomes stuck. The struggle to free itself will stimulate glands to move in position toward the insect thus further entrapping it. If the insect lands on the outside of the leaf pad, the glands will shift the position of the insect toward the center where the glands are more numerous. This movement of the glands is thought to be a plant growth response or tropism. Once the insect is ensnared, digestive enzymes will be released from cells on the surface of the leaf and the insect victim will be digested. The leaves of sundews are green (but may turn red from exposure to sunlight) and photosynthetic. The sundews and other insectivorous plants live in environments where nitrogen is in low supply or is not available because of pH conditions. In digesting the nitrogen-rich chitinous exoskeletons of insects, the plant meets its nitrogen needs. There have been few herbal uses and no edible uses of sundews. One herbal use of this plant was to treat lung problems. Another use involved using the somewhat caustic juice extracted from sundew plants to treat warts and corns as well as to remove freckles and treat sunburn.

This summer if you visit Suitland Bogs in our metropolitan area, or travel to other areas along the East Coast where there are wetlands, keep your eye out for species of this fascinating genus. The "lifestyle" of sundews may not be kind to members of the insect world, but its beauty delights those of us lucky enough to observe it.

Meadow Display at Fair

This year's Prince William County Fair will be Aug. 13-21. Ken Bass and Claudia Thompson-Deahl are working on our chapter's display which will have a meadow theme. Jeanne Endrikat will be lining up volunteers to host the display. Please help out if you are called, or call Jeanne at 703-361-3695 to volunteer a couple hours of your time.

How to Develop a Backyard Habitat

Craig Tufts from the National Wildlife Federation will present a backyard habitat program at 10 a.m. on Sat., Aug. 28 at Meadowlark Gardens, Vienna, Va. Call 703-255-3631 for reservations and information.

Invasive Exotic Plants

A conference to call attention to the threat of alien plants to Virginia's natural areas will be held Aug. 12 and 13 in Blacksburg, Va. Topics include control of purple loosestrife, multiflora rose and other exotics. Speakers will also discuss using native plants, including grasses, in cultivated landscapes. The Virginia Native Plant Society is a co-sponsor of the conference along with several other Virginia businesses, organizations, government agencies and the Virginia Tech Department of Horticulture. For a brochure and carpooling information, call Nicky Staunton at 703-368-9803.

NATIVES FOR THE GARDEN

NANCY ARRINGTON
Propagation Chairman



Summersweet

Clethra alnifolia

Summersweet is a lovely name for a delightful summer flowering shrub. Sweetly fragrant white spires are set off by dark green lustrous foliage. It's also called sweet pepperbush apparently because its seed capsules, which remain until the following summer, resemble peppercorns.

The genus name *Clethra* is a Greek work for alder and *alnifolia* means "leaves like alder". Summersweet is found in wetlands from southern Maine to Florida. It grows along the coastal plain and into the piedmont areas of Virginia.

This handsome bushy upright 8-10' tall shrub is normally 4-6' wide but may produce suckers that will form dense colonies. Dark green ovate leaves are 3-4" long and about 1½" wide. Flowering spikes, 4-6" long, are made up of numerous tiny five-petaled flowers. Flowering progresses up the spike and new flowering spikes begin blooming every few days, prolonging

flowering for four to six weeks from mid-July into August.

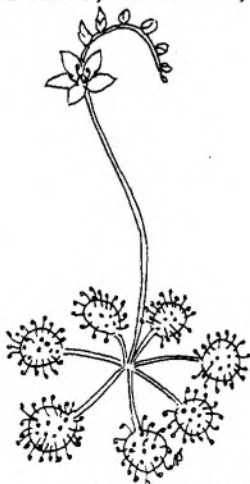
In 1932, Louise Beebe Wilder wrote in *The Fragrant Path* that summersweet perfumed the whole countryside and said it was called "Sailor's Delight" around Gloucester, Mass. because men on incoming ships smelled its sweetness while still far out at sea. Around the same time, Herbert Durand, author of *My Wild Flower Garden*, called it "...nature's most delightful and most tantalizing fragrance...a fragrance with a tang that makes the nostrils tingle and creates an insatiable desire for more." Branches cut for indoor bouquets remain fresh and fragrant for several days.

Summersweet is a perfect choice for a sunny, slightly acid, poorly drained area in the garden. It will also grow well in part shade with average moisture. However, flowering and fall coloring (pale yellow to rich golden brown) will be better in full sun.

Use summersweet as a background shrub in a mixed border or as part of a shrub border. Plant it near outdoor sitting areas or anywhere you can enjoy its sweet lilac-like fragrance. Butterflies, bees and an unusual assortment of other insects will be attracted to its nectar-rich flowers.

Propagate by seed, softwood cuttings in summer, or by digging out the suckers it produces. Several cultivars are available, including pink flowering 'Rosea' and 'Pink Spires'. 'Paniculata' has very large flowers and dwarf 'Hummingbird' stays around 4' tall.

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Round Leaf Sundew

Drosera rotundifolia

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