



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

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

### Annual Meeting & Picnic

1:00 P.M., Sunday, September 18, 1994

Leesylvania State Park, 16236 Neabsco Rd., Woodbridge

All members received a notice of the annual meeting with a ballot in a special mailing sent out in August. Our picnic will begin at 1 p.m. Bring a salad, vegetable or main dish to share. Beverages, bread, desserts, plates, etc. will be furnished. The annual meeting will start at 2 p.m. with election of officers (return the ballot if you can't come) and voting on the 1995 proposed budget. At 3 p.m. Marion Lobstein will lead a wildflower walk. There is a \$2 entrance fee to the park.

Directions: From Manassas: Davis Ford Rd. to Minnieville Rd.; right on Minnieville to Dale Blvd.; left on Dale Blvd. to Rt. 1; right on Rt. 1 to Neabsco Rd.; right on Neabsco until you see sign on the right for Leesylvania State Park.

### VNPS Annual Meeting & Auction

Several PWWS members are planning to attend the VNPS annual meeting hosted by the Jefferson Chapter, September 23-25 in Charlottesville (details and registration form in *Bulletin*).

The auction committee still needs items valued at \$25 or more for the live auction and less expensive items for the silent auction. Auction items should have a nature theme and can include artwork, books, T-shirts, pottery, dried wreaths, live plants and garden tools. Call Nancy Vehrs, 368-2898, if you have items or can convince a local business to contribute articles.

### Virginia Environmental Newsletter

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality publishes "DEQ News," a newsletter that informs Virginia citizens about the department's activities. To get on the mailing list write to: DEQ News, P.O. Box 10009, Richmond VA 23240.

### Potowmack Plant Sale

Potowmack Chapter's fall wildflower sale will be Saturday, September 17, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. at Green Spring Garden Park, Annandale. For info, call Green Spring, 642-5173.

### Fern Valley's Meadow & Prairie

In addition to its old field meadow the Fern Valley Native Plant Collection now includes a half-acre prairie display habitat. To learn more about both, join Curator Joan Feely for a walk on Saturday, October 1 at 1 p.m. Meet at the Capitol Columns. For more information, call 202-245-2726.

### October Board Meeting

The October Board of Directors meeting will be the third Monday, October 17, 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church, Plantation Ln. & Sudley Rd., Manassas. Incoming board members are encouraged to attend.

### Next Meeting

Our November membership meeting will be on the third Monday, November 21, 7:30 p.m., at Bethel Lutheran Church. PWWS Conservation Chair Martha Slover will present a slide program titled "Endangered Plants of Prince William & Fairfax Counties." Details in next newsletter.

# Proposed 1995 Budget

Nov. 1, 1994 – Oct. 31, 1995

## RECEIPTS:

|               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Dues          | \$ 700.         |
| Plant Sale    | 1,600.          |
| Miscellaneous | 200.            |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>\$2,500.</b> |

## DISBURSEMENTS:

|                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Postage           | \$ 700.         |
| Printing          | 750.            |
| Gifts & Honoraria | 250.            |
| Programs          | 150.            |
| Plant Sale Exp.   | 100.            |
| Sales Tax         | 100.            |
| Education         | 350.            |
| Wildflower Week   | 100.            |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>\$2,500.</b> |

## Lawn Care & Water Quality

Prince William Cooperative Extension is sponsoring a series of lawn care field days this fall to help homeowners improve their lawns while protecting local water quality.

"Soil testing, Aerification and Overseeding" will be discussed at Ben Lomond Park, Manassas, Saturday, September 17, 9-11 a.m.

"Lawn Fertilization, Drainage and Erosion Control" is scheduled for Saturday, October 1, at Anne Wall Park, Montclair, and Saturday, October 8 at Ben Lomond Park, Manassas. Both sessions are 9-11 a.m.

"Leaf Recycling, Mulching and Gypsy Moth Control" will be covered Saturday, November 5 at Anne Wall Park, and Saturday, November 12 at Ben Lomond Park. Both sessions are 9-11 a.m. For more information call the Extension office, 792-6285.

## WILD NEWS

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Editor, Nancy Arrington, 368-8431  
Artist, Nicky Staunton, 368-9803

Deadline for the Nov.-Dec. issue is Nov. 1, 1994.



## From the President NANCY VEHR'S

I hope you've had a wonderful summer and are now settling into the new fall routine. I enjoyed a terrific vacation in Wyoming in August when I visited an old college friend of mine. Though she now lives in a small town with a population of 1,155, we did not want for activities. Her town of Guernsey is next to the North Platte River along the route of the Oregon Trail. I took a short bike ride in the area one fine morning. Though the prairie was very dry from drought, the beautiful native sunflowers cheered the scene. At the historic Register Cliff along the Trail, I gazed upon the historical name carvings and marveled at those pioneers who strove to make a better life for themselves by traversing this great land of ours.

One day my friend took me to the area of Laramie Peak (elevation 10,279') by way of a dirt ranch road where I had to get out of the vehicle to open all the gates along the way. The dry prairie was absolutely stunning in its stark beauty.

The highlight of my vacation was a short, two-night camping trip to Snowy Range in Medicine Bow National Forest. Those rocky mountains are majestic with their glacial ice and snow and the numerous glacial lakes provide a beautiful contrast. Lovely asters were abundant near the water and we even found a nice clump of mountain bluebells still hanging on. The views in the area were incredible. That trip to Medicine Bow literally changed my life.

As my term as president winds to a close, I must reflect upon the accomplishments of the chapter these last two years. In addition to our "bread and butter" activities like the garden tours, field trips, and plant sale, we also hosted an excellent VNPS annual meeting last year and we registered a significant stand of wildflowers at James Long Park. Many people work behind the scenes at PWWS and I am grateful for their guidance and hard work. With the strong foundation of doers in the society, PWWS will continue to develop under the leadership of incoming president Helen Walter. She has courageously fought back from her accident two years ago and she is eager to lead our group into bigger and better things. I'm sure that she can count on the support of all our members.

See you on the 18th at Leesylvania State Park!



## Blazing Stars

(*Liatris species*)

MARION LOBSTEIN

Associate Professor, Biology, NVCC

*Liatris spicata*, commonly called spiked blazing star, along with three other less common *Liatris* species in our area are perennial members of the Asteraceae or aster family. The bright lavender to rose purple colors of the masses of flower heads of all these species begin to appear in July and add color to meadows, fields, and roadsides through September and even early October. The three less common species found in Northern Virginia are grass-leaved blazing star (*L. graminifolia*), large blazing star (*L. scariosa*), and scaly blazing star (*L. squarrosa*). The habitat of spiked blazing star is in wet to moist meadows and other open habitats while the other three species are found in drier, open habitats. The range of spiked blazing star is from Florida and Louisiana north to New York and Michigan. The other three species generally have a fairly wide range up and down the eastern part of the United States. The genus name of *Liatris* is not known. The species names of *graminifolia*, *scariosa*, and *squarrosa* mean, respectively, grass-leaved, scarious, and with spreading teeth. The other frequently used common name for this group is gay feathery.

Like other members of the composite family, the "flowers" of these plants are actually heads of many individual flowers. Most composites such as the common daisy have heads both of petal-like or ray flowers and of tubular or disk flowers. Species of blazing stars

have flowering heads of only tubular or disk flowers. Each individual flower has a series of modified sepals that are bristles (collectively known as the pappus), five fused petals, five united stamens, and a pistil with two stigmas and an inferior ovary. In all four species pollination is by insects. The fruits formed after fertilization are achenes with small barbs. Individual flower head sizes vary from less than an inch to over an inch in diameter. The arrangements of the heads is that of a spike except in large blazing star which has heads in a more open raceme. The two species most easily confused are the spiked and the grass-leaved. The grass-leaved species has soft hairs inside each tubular flower while the spiked species is hairless.

Height of these four species range from six inches in scaly blazing star to almost four feet for spiked blazing star. The leaves are linear in all but the large blazing star which has broader more ovate leaves. All four species have underground storage stems such as corns or rhizomes and fibrous roots.

The medicinal uses of members of the blazing star genus are limited. Some Indian tribes and herbalists used root teas made from various blazing star species as a diuretic, tonic, and sore throat gargle. Other uses have been to treat gonorrhoea, menstrual cramps, and kidney/bladder problems. Poultices made from the root were used to treat snakebite.

With their displays of colorful heads of flowers, our species of blazing star add much to the beauty of meadows and other open areas in late summer and early fall. This fall take time to examine a single head and a single flower of this handsome composite family member. One excellent site to see scaly blazing star is at Deep Cut in the Manassas National Battlefield Park.

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## Butterfly License Plate

A license plate featuring the Tiger Swallowtail, Virginia's State Insect, will become available when its sponsor, The Butterfly Society of Virginia, Inc., has presold 150 plates.

To order the butterfly plate, send a check for \$10 made out to The Butterfly Society of Virginia, Inc. along with a completed communiplate application form available at all DMV offices to: Butterfly Society of Virginia Treasurer, 276 S. Parliament Drive, Virginia Beach VA 23462. If you want to personalize your plate (six letters/numbers or less), include another \$10 in your check. The butterfly plate cost is a one-time fee. The communiplate fee for personalization is \$10 each year in addition to the regular registration fee. If you have any questions, call 804-423-1682.

## Wildflower Walks at Great Falls

Marion Lobstein continues to lead walks at Great Falls Park on the third Sunday of each month. Fall dates are September 18, October 16, and November 20. Meet at the Virginia side visitors center at 10 a.m.; walks end around 12:30 p.m. Call Marion for more info, 703-536-7150.

## Wildflower Seed Collection

Learn how to collect, process and grow wildflower seeds in this hands-on outdoor seed collecting workshop at the National Arboretum. Join Joan Feely, Curator of the Native Plant Collections, Saturday, October 15, at 1 p.m. Begin at Fern Valley entrance (if raining, meet at headhouse). Info: 202-245-2726.

## NATIVES FOR THE GARDEN

NANCY ARRINGTON  
Propagation Chairman



### Blazing Star

(*Liatris spicata*)

Of the several *Liatris* species I've tried, *L. spicata* is the most satisfactory mainly because it's been the most permanent. While others have succumbed to rodents or poorly drained soil three original plants of this species are sizeable clumps that have begun to produce a few seedlings.

It's native to wet meadows, roadside ditches, and other low, moist areas from New York to Michigan and south to Florida and Louisiana. It isn't shown in Prince William County in the *Atlas of the Virginia Flora*, but grows in Fairfax, Loudoun and western mountain counties.

Though the origin of the genus name is unknown, *spicata* means spike and refers to the three-to five-foot tall spikes rising from clumps of dense grass-like foliage. Alternate narrow leaves are about six inches long at the bottom of the stem and are progressively smaller toward the top. The 12- to 18-inch inflorescence consists of

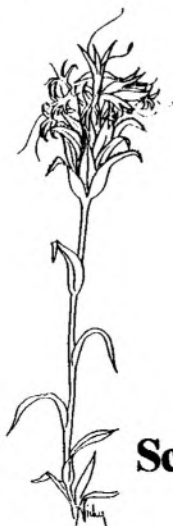
numerous small rosy lavender thistle-like flowers that begin blooming at the top. This trait, the exact opposite of most flowers, adds to blazing star's attractiveness in the garden and as a cut flower because spent blossoms can be snipped off. Its importance as a nectar plant for butterflies is another good reason for growing it.

This beautiful composite can be grown in any garden setting from perennial border to a wildflower meadow. In the fertile, slightly moist soil it prefers, spikes will be tall and slender. Drier, less fertile soil produces shorter, stockier plants. Soil should be fairly well-drained during winter.

Blazing star is a wonderful vertical accent for the summer and fall garden. Good native companions that bloom at the same time include mistflower (*Eupatorium coelestinum*), summer phlox (*P. paniculata*), blue lobelia (*L. siphilitica*), ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*), and blackeyed Susans (*Rudbeckia* spp.). One of its best companions in my garden is *Kalimeris pininfidita*, a Japanese aster with very fine foliage and small white flowers that blooms from July until frost.

In *Growing and Propagating Wild Flowers* Harry Phillips suggests an easy seed growing method: When seed is ripe, cut the stalk and lay it down in an outdoor seed bed or cold frame and cover with a half inch of soil. Seedlings will appear in the spring.

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Scaly Blazing Star  
(*Liatris squarrosa*)

ANNUAL MEETING: Sunday, Sept. 18, 1:00 P.M. Leesylvania State Park, Woodbridge, Va.