



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

MARCH MEETING

The Future of Manassas National Battlefield Park

7:30 p.m., Monday, March 17, 1997

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

Our speaker on March 17 will be Jeff Reinbold of the National Park Service. Jeff will tell us about the new general management plan for the Manassas National Battlefield Park, an important subject for all of us who live in Prince William County or try to make our way through the notorious intersection of routes 29 and 234. The park's current plan was completed in 1983 and since then the huge Stuart's Hill tract has been added. The new plan will determine how the park will respond to the challenges of the next 15 to 20 years, providing the basic philosophy and broad direction for long-term decisions, activities, and development of the park.

PWWS Wildflower Walks

Want to visit some special Prince William wildflowers? PWWS will sponsor walks on the following dates:

- 4/13 Bull Run Regional Park, 1-3 p.m.
- 4/20 Woodbridge Wildlife Refuge, 10-noon
- 5/4 Thompson Wildlife Mgt. Area, noon-3 p.m.
- 5/11 Conway Robinson Mem. Forest, noon-3 p.m.
- 5/24 Woodbridge Wildlife Refuge, 10-noon

Call Nicky Staunton, 703-368-9803, for reservations. Limit 12 per hike.

Virginia Wildflower Celebration

Our Virginia Wildflower Celebration runs through the months of April and May. Events sponsored by all chapters will be listed in the Spring *Bulletin*. PWWS Chapter events are covered in this newsletter. Celebrate spring and wildflowers – participate in our walks, tours, programs and other activities.

Tree Workshop Reminder

If you haven't signed up to attend the VNPS Winter Workshop, "The State of Virginia's Native Trees," March 22 in Richmond, remember March 17 is the registration deadline. For more information, call Nicky Staunton, 703-368-9803.

April Board Meeting

The April board of directors meeting will be on the third Monday, April 21, 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church. Board meetings are open to all members.

Next Meeting

The May membership meeting will be on the third Monday, May 19, 7:30 p.m., at Bethel Lutheran Church. Effie Fox, VNPS education chair, will present a slide program on our registry sites. Details in the next newsletter.

Native Plant Trail Tour

The Potowmack Chapter has scheduled a tour of the Virginia Native Plant Trail at Green Spring Gardens Park, Annandale, 1-2 p.m., Saturday, April 26. Learn which species are appropriate for landscaping, how to grow them and where to buy them. Reserve your spot by calling Green Spring, 703-941-1065.

Area Wildflower Walks

PWWS members are cordially invited to participate in these spring wildflower walks led by Marion Lobstein:

- Sun., April 20, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Great Falls Park
- Sun., April 20, 2:30 to 4:30 p.m., Balls Bluff
- Sun., May 18, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Great Falls Park

Call Marion, 703-536-7150, for information or reservations for these free walks.

New Program Chair

Charles Smith, our chapter's new program chair is lining up speakers for our membership meetings. He'd be happy to hear from any member who can either present a program or knows someone who can. Also let Charles know if there's a subject related to native plants that you'd like to know more about and he'll try to find a speaker. Charles is land administrator/ planner for the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and can be reached at (H) 703-361-5125 or (W) 703-359-4617.

WILD NEWS

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Deadline for the May-June issue is May 1, 1997.



From the President HELEN WALTER

This winter, opportunities have presented themselves for PWWS to become more involved with the Virginia State Arboretum and the Manassas National Battlefield Park. An extensive native plant trail is planned for the Arboretum and its friends group is eager to recruit the local VNPS chapters to help with planting and maintenance, as well as contributions of plants. This is currently in the planning stages and, as they develop a landscaping scheme and planting schedule, they will let us know more specific ways that we can help. More later....

The Manassas National Battlefield Park has a new friends group, and I'm chairing their natural resources committee. The park has plans for a wildflower garden behind the new Stuart's Hill visitor center, and could use our help and advice with it. They are implementing a new general management plan, so this is a good time to be a voice for natural resources issues in the park. We already have registry sites there, and a good working relationship with park personnel. This is our chance to expand our visibility at Manassas National Battlefield Park, the subject of this month's program. Come and hear Jeff Reinbold tell us about future plans for the park.

If this is March, next month must be the annual garden tour, followed by the plant sale in May, so be prepared for the usual sign-up sheets at our March 17 meeting. Not a bad deal, since in exchange for a couple of hours of your weekend, you get to bask in the reflected glory of someone else's hard work while enjoying a beautiful garden and lots of great people. With this much lead time, I expect plenty of you to clear a few hours of your weekends for such worthwhile projects.

See you on St. Patrick's Day.

PWWS Plant Sale

This year's plant sale will be held Saturday, May 10, 9 a.m. to noon, in the parking lot of Bethel Lutheran Church (same location as our meetings).

Call Nancy Arrington, 368-8431, if you can donate plants or if you need help getting your plants potted. Call also if you need labels (plants should be labeled with botanical and common names). Be sure plants are potted up three weeks in advance so they will look good for the sale. Plan to get your plants to the sale site by 7:30 on the morning of the 10th.

On the morning of the sale we need many helping hands to unload and arrange plants, to serve as tellers during the sale, and to clean up afterwards. Call Nancy and let her know how you can help. Encourage your friends to come and purchase plants, and remember members get a 10% discount on plants.

Potowmack Chapter Plant Sale

Potowmack Chapter's spring plant sale will be Saturday, May 17, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Green Spring Gardens Park near Annandale. Call Gerry Pratt, 323-1094, for information.

Garden Fair at Blandy

The Friends of the State Arboretum of Virginia at Blandy Experimental Farm will hold their Annual Garden Fair on Saturday and Sunday, May 10 and 11, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day. For more information, call 540-837-1758.

Wintergreen Symposium

Wintergreen's annual wildflower symposium will be May 9-11. Wildflower walks, workshops and slide shows will keep participants busy through the weekend. Several VNPS members will be trip leaders or speakers. For a brochure, write to The Wintergreen Nature Foundation, P.O. Box 468, Wintergreen, VA 22958, or call Eva Lowe, 804-325-8169.

Wildflowers for Historical Society

Nicky Staunton will present a slide program, "Wildflowers through Prince William-Bull Run Mountain to Potomac Shore," for the Prince William Historical Society, 7:30 p.m., April 17, at the McCort Building.

Wildflower Classroom Presentation

Kim Hosen, PWWS education chair, is compiling a slide show of Prince William County Wildflowers to be used for school presentations. The program, designed to increase student's awareness of local wildflowers, will include a slide of each plant in its flower and seed state. The discussion that accompanies each slide will include characteristics of the plant, habitat, flowering season, interrelationships and any other interesting information/folklore.

This is a call for your help! Many chapter members have taken wonderful pictures of wildflowers that would help make this slide show spectacular. If you have extra slides or ones that can be copied, please give Kim a call at 703-491-8406. Any information on the wildflower represented will be very helpful also. Credit will given to all photographers.

Anyone interested in helping write the text that will accompany these slides is invited to participate. We are hoping to have a presentation set and ready to go for the 1997-98 school year.

Extension Field Days

The Prince William Unit of the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service has scheduled the following free lawn and garden field days at 9 to 11 a.m. at Montclair Property Owners Assn (MPOA), 3561 Waterway Dr., Montclair, and in the brown barn at Ben Lomond Community Center (BLCC), 10501 Copeland Dr., Manassas:

Mowing & Pruning, March 15, MPOA; March 22, BLCC

Backyard Composting & Landscape Design, April 19, MPOA; April 26 BLCC

Integrated Pest Management (IPM), May 10, MPOA; May 17, BLCC

Plant to Avoid Problems & Watering, June 14 MPOA; June 21, BLCC

Call the extension office, 792-6285, for more information.

Butterfly Gardening

Nancy Arrington, PWWS propagation chair, will present a slide program on "Wildflowers for Butterfly Gardens", 7-8:30 p.m., Tues., March 25 at Bull Run Regional Library, Ashton Ave., Manassas. The program is free, but reservations are required, 792-4500.

PWWS Garden Tour

This year's garden tour, our twelfth, will be held (rain or shine), Saturday, April 26, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, April 27, 1 to 5 p.m. (please note later starting time for Saturday). Garden tour chairman Marie Davis has lined up the following gardens for this year's tour:

The Cockrill garden, Evergreen

The Milhous garden, Haymarket

The Taylor garden, Catharpin

The Taylor and Milhous gardens have been on previous tours; the Cockrill garden is open for the first time this year.

We need members to furnish refreshments, help get the gardens ready, and serve as hosts/hostesses during the tour. Helen Walter is taking care of scheduling and she'd like to hear from you—call her at 330-9614 and offer to help.

As in past years, our tour is free since it serves as an educational project for our chapter and gives visitors a preview of plants offered at our sale two weeks later. A brochure with directions to the gardens will be mailed to members; call Marie Davis, 361-1626, if you'd like extra copies.

Landscaping Symposium at Arboretum

"Native Plants: Simply Spectacular," the 11th annual Lahr Landscape Symposium, will be held Saturday, March 22, at the U. S. National Arboretum, 3501 New York Ave., NE, Washington, DC. The day begins with registration and plant sales at 8 a.m., the first presentation is at 9 a.m., and the program ends at 4:30 p.m. Topics include restoring natural ecosystems, carnivorous plants and their wetland habitats, North American trilliums, and the evolution of a personal native plant sanctuary. Subjects of concurrent sessions are invasive exotics, orchids in the garden, native rock garden plants and creating a bog garden. Fee of \$60 includes lunch; call the arboretum for a brochure, 202-245-4523. Register by March 17 or pay a \$10 late fee.

Wetlands Program

Michael Rolban, professional wetlands restorer, will present a program on wetlands in Prince William at the Natural Resources Council Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Wed., April 2, McCort Building.

Loren Staunton Memorial

PWWS members will donate a tree to be planted at the Virginia State Arboretum as a memorial to Loren Staunton who passed away December 9, 1996. A swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*) was planted at the arboretum in Nicky Staunton's honor upon her retirement as president of the VNPS. It would be a fitting tribute to both Nicky and Loren for members of our chapter to contribute a tree dedicated to Loren where it could grow close to Nicky's tree, perhaps with roots entwined. Donations will come from individual chapter members — no chapter funds will be used. Please send your check, made out to PWWS, to PWWS Staunton Memorial, P.O. Box 83, Manassas, VA 20108

Field Botany

Marion Lobstein will teach Field Botany (EVEC493/793, 3 credits through UVA) 9 a.m to 4 p.m., June 23-26, June 30-July 3, and July 7-10 at the State Arboretum of Virginia, Blandy Experimental Farm. This course will cover basic principles of botany with emphasis on the classification, identification, and evolution of flowering plants. It will integrate lecture and laboratory with an emphasis on field trip experience concentrating on identification and ecology of flowering plants of the Mid-Atlantic region. For additional information call Blandy Experimental Farm at 540-837-1758 or Marion at 703-536-7150.

Bull Run Bluebell Walk

The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority's annual Bluebell Walk will be held on Sunday, April 20, 2 p.m., at Bull Run Regional Park, Centreville. Naturalists and park rangers will lead visitors in small groups along the one-and-a-half-mile Bluebell Trail.

Guided walks can be scheduled for groups throughout "Bluebell Week", Sunday, April 20 to Friday, April 25. Groups should make reservations at least two weeks in advance. Self-guiding pamphlets are available for those who want to walk on their own. For information, or to schedule a tour, call 703-528-5406.

The park is open daily, dawn to dusk. To reach Bull Run, visitors take I-66 west, exit at Centreville and follow highway signs to the park entrance.



Pussytoes

Antennaria plantaginifolia

MARION LOBSTEIN

Associate Professor, Biology, NVCC

Antennaria plantaginifolia, commonly called plantain-leaved pussytoes is a perennial member of the Asteraceae or aster family. The basal leaves of this species persist through the winter and begin in early April to send up a wooly-haired stem with a cluster of flower heads that will be either male or female. These flower heads are soft and when touched feel like the toes of a cat, thus the common name. This species of pussytoes is found in virtually every county of Virginia in open, often rocky woods, and in open fields. It can colonize nutrient-poor soils, thus enriching these soils for other species. Its range is from Maine south to Georgia and Alabama and west to Missouri. The genus name of *Antennaria* refers to the resemblance of some of the flower parts to the antennae of insects and *plantaginifolia* refers to the plantain-like basal leaves. Another common name for this species is early everlasting. Members of this genus and the closely related genus *Genaphalum* are called everlastings because their leaves persist through the winter. Other species of this genus less commonly found in our area are field pussytoes (*A. neglecta*), solitary pussytoes (*A. solitaria*), and shale-barren pussytoes (*A. virginica*). The use of pussytoes in this article refers to the plantain-leaved species.

The loose cluster of up to five or more flower heads may appear in late March or early April and persist into May. These flowerhead buds open to reveal either male or female flowers, a condition known as dioecious (two households). Members of the composite family have "flowers" that are actually flowerheads made up of many flowers in a leafy cup or involucre. Most composite flowers such as the daisy have both

disk flowers in the center and ray flowers that are the "petals." In pussytoes the flowerheads of either sex are only disk flowers. The female white flowerheads are more elongated and may be up to one-half inch long whereas the male white flowerheads are broader and flatter with red stamens protruding from individual flowers. Insects are the pollinators of plantain-leaved pussytoes. Some species of pussytoes can have the female flower produce fruits without pollination and fertilization, a phenomenon known as apomixis (dandelions often reproduce in this manner.) The fruits of pussytoes are similar to those of a dandelion but are more delicate and are wind-dispersed. In the female flowers, the fine white hairs of the modified sepals, each of which is called a pappus, forms the hairy part of the fruit.

The wooly-haired light gray-green stems of pussytoes are typically 3-15" tall. Pussytoes send out horizontal aboveground stems called stolons, especially on rocky soils, and in more penetrable soils, underground stems called rhizomes. These stolons and/or rhizomes allow the plant to spread widely. The wooly-haired, light gray-green basal leaves are broadly oval with pointed tips. These will be 2-4" long with 3-5 prominent nerves or veins that resemble the leaves of common plantain (*Plantago major*). The stem leaves are much smaller and are without the prominent veins. When crushed or bruised, the leaves and stems have a sweet odor.

There are numerous medicinal uses of pussytoes species by American Indians as well as herbalists. A tea or milk extract made from the leaves has been used to treat diarrhea and dysentery as well as lung ailments. Poultices were used for a variety of problems ranging from boils to bruises and sprains. Some Indian tribes even used this and related species to treat snakebites, even rattlesnake bites.

This spring enjoy the soft white flowers of pussytoes. Get down on your hands and knees to discover for yourself the reason this enchanting spring wildflower is called pussytoes.

Mother's Day Wildflower Walk

Join a naturalist at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, Centreville, 2 p.m., Sunday, May 11 for a relaxing wildflower walk. Call 703-631-0013 for information and reservations.

Sunny Wildflower Gardens

PWWS landscape chair Marie Davis will present a slide lecture on "Wildflower Gardens for Sunny Areas, 2-4 p.m., Sunday, May 18, at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, Centreville. Cost is \$2; call 703-631-0013 for reservations.

NATIVES FOR THE GARDEN

NANCY ARRINGTON
Propagation Chairman



Pussytoes

Antennaria plantaginifolia

It's easy to dismiss plantain-leaved pussytoes (*Antennaria plantaginifolia*) as a common field or roadside plant with no horticultural use. However, this little charmer is a fine groundcover for sunny areas in the garden. It's tough enough to form large mats in rough, rocky places yet dainty enough to use as an edging or rock garden plant.

Pussytoes is one of the earliest plants to "green up" in the spring though grayish-green is a more accurate description of the color. The 2-4" long leaves appear silvery gray in early spring, turn greenish-gray, and then sometimes completely green as the season progresses. In the garden it is valued for its ground hugging, almost evergreen foliage rather than the small, fuzzy white flowers that appear in mid-April. The weak foot-tall flowering stems often topple over and become entangled with each other. Usually plants will spread rapidly enough by runners, or can be increased by di-

vision, so that the flowers aren't needed for seed and can be cut off when they become unsightly.

Pussytoes will form large flat silvery carpets in sunny areas where the soil is well-drained and rather poor. It's a good substitute for grass though it won't take much foot traffic. It can be planted on a dry sandy or rocky slope to help stabilize the soil, and is a good groundcover for crocus and other small spring-flowering bulbs that need a summer baking.

This native groundcover can be planted in the cracks of a stone walkway or patio and small divisions can be tucked into the crevices of a stone wall. In these situations, as well as around stones edging a flower bed or in a rock garden, it will spread by above ground stolens. Just be sure pussytoes has the good drainage it needs to grow well. Heavy clay soil can be amended with very coarse sand or turkey grit (available at Southern States).

Our locally native pussytoes is available from mail order native plant nurseries, and other species including *A. dioica* are available from some local retail nurseries. Two cultivars of *A. dioica*, 'Minima' which makes a thick inch-tall carpet, and 'Rosea' with attractive pink flowers on 4" stems, are available.

Pussytoes, along with pearly everlasting, (*Anaphalis margaritacea*), is a caterpillar food plant for the American painted lady butterfly.

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